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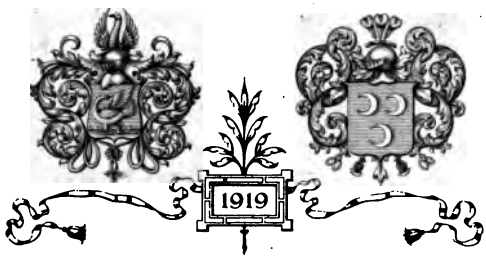

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WHERE HONOUR LEADS

BY

LYNDE PALMER

AUTHOR OF "A QUESTION OF HONOUR," "JOHN-JACK,"
"ONE DAY'S WEAVING," ETC.

"And lo, Ben Adhem's name led all the rest!"—LEIGH HUNT.

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WHERE HONOUR LEADS.

CHAPTER I.

TEN YEARS AFTER.

It was a warm afternoon in the sun and shine of late April. Cousin Delia's small red-eyed maid had emerged for a few moments from an unequal combat with the dust and chaos of the garret. The yard back of the little red cottage, fluttering with the accumulations of years, was like a dingy illustrated history extending almost to prehistoric times.

"And I hope it's all the heaven she'll ever git," gasped the small maid to herself, as she washed the dishes for the early dinner, and tried to get even with her grasping mistress, by a running commentary on the situation, of the most scornful and uncomplimentary nature. "I hope them clean, white clothes 'n' harps 'n' crown'll be laid on a shelf too high for her, and she'll jest find nothin' but her old riddled frocks, and her dusty bits of carpet with the roses eat off of 'em."

Cousin Delia, herself, a trifle dryer and more woodeny, perhaps, but wiry and active as ever, was stepping briskly from her bedroom, having smoothed her hair, put on her second best black stuff gown, and hung her knitting-bag on her arm.

"Mr. Parsons'll sleep all the afternoon, most likely, Nancy," she said, pointing to where Cousin Hiram, clean and comfortable, nodded over the smouldering fire, "and I'm goin' up to Mis' Page's a spell, and mebbe I'll stay to tea. I hain't been up since she come, and she must be feelin' it."

"Oh, most likely!" muttered the small maid, in a satire most delicious to her bruised soul. "She must be jest worn to the bone frettin' for you."

"What say?" cried Cousin Delia sharply, and not waiting for answer she continued:

"And you can beat out every one of them bits of carpet, and brush 'em, and lay 'em on a pile in the back kitchen, so I can put them away to-morrow. And I'd like you to darn the hole in the red piece; I ain't sure but I'll want to use it before I git through with the cleanin'. And then you can tidy up the back stoop, and wipe off the sittin'-room winders, and sweep up about the yard, and don't forgit to feed the chickens; I guess that'll keep you goin' till I git back."

Ten Years After.

"Yes," cried the small maid, choking and sobbing, and shaking her broom vindictively after Cousin Delia's departing skirts. "Yes, it 'ud keep me till Gabriel's trump. But I'm goin' out in the medder to lie in the grass a hull hour, if I die for it!"

But Cousin Delia, with short, jerky steps, was hurrying on her way, seeing nothing of the exquisite pale green mist clinging to the trees, hearing nothing of the rapture of the birds, all "the spring-time bubbling in their throats." She didn't know why those idiotic poets were always going into raptures every May-time. It was one of her firm beliefs that Nature was a mysterious and implacable enemy, never more to be distrusted than when under the velvet softness of spring she tried to hide the ever malicious claw. What with rain catching you almost any moment, as if some spiteful hand had hold of the string of a shower-bath, with a lasting grudge against your Sunday clothes, and the genial north-easters blowing rheumatism to the very marrow of your bones, she considered spring a delusion and a snare, a very Mephistopheles of seasons.

"You don't know what I've been through to git here, Dorothy," she said fretfully, as she stood at the door of the Page homestead, holding up her draggled skirt. "Sunshine when I

started, and a tub of water thrown on me just afore I got to the gate. People shouldn't never try to do a kind action, they allus git paid for their folly. I'd ought to have learned that lesson."

Dorothy, a charming vision, stood in the doorway. The years, not yet unfriendly, had only developed a gracious loveliness that more than fulfilled the promise of her youth. A smile of tender humour was playing about her mouth. Her sweet nature, that could not treasure up a wrong, had long ago forgiven the bitterness of her early years. Her great happiness had made her magnanimous, and she had even won Schuyler and Tom to a stiff neutrality. To be sure their lives had touched but seldom in all these intervening years, spent mostly at Athens. There might be friction now that they had again become neighbours, but she smiled again to think how completely the old tyranny was a thing of the past, and how small a cloud it would now be in Cousin Delia's power to throw across her summer sky.

"I don't know what you're laughin' at, Dorothy," said Cousin Delia reproachfully. "Since the Lord has made us neighbours again, I've come up to try and begin right. I come up special to say that I ain't no hand at hoardin' spite, and whatever I've been called to bear in the past, I'm willin' to let by-gones be by-gones.

If other folks ain't ready to meet me halfway, why, it's their loss. I can say I done my duty."

"And other folks will try to do theirs," smiled Dorothy, removing Cousin Delia's wraps with careful hands, and drawing an easy-chair in front of the cheery wood fire.

Cousin Delia settled herself comfortably and drew out her knitting.

"Schuyler in?" she asked.

"No; he went to Athens yesterday, and will not be home till late to-night."

Cousin Delia drew a long breath. "So I heard," she said, "but I wa'n't sure. Where's Tom?"

"Oh, maybe you'll see him before you go, but he told me not to wait tea for him to-night, he might be detained."

Cousin Delia brightened visibly and stretched out her feet to the luxury of the blaze, while her keen eyes roved restlessly to and fro.

"I hain't been in this house to look around, in years," she said. "Me and the late Mis' Page was no great cronies. I ain't sayin' nothin' agin her; we all have our shortcomin's," she added magnanimously. "She might 'a' been a trifle set up with all her goods and belongin's, but she was obleeged to go and leave 'em all the same." Cousin Delia heaved a decorous

sigh. "Perhaps them as are better stewards are left longer; we can't tell."

"I should think not," began Dorothy indignantly.

"Now, you've no call to fly out," said Cousin Delia calmly, her shrewd, beady eyes twinkling on every side. "I'd no idee she'd lined her nest quite so soft," she added with a growing envy, "though there's lots of things that ain't no earthly use. Didn't she have no room in her pantry for them crazy bits o' crockery? And what's the sense o' them pitchers with the long, useless necks? And I don't know how some folks make it right with their conscience, but I should feel mean as dirt with all them silk curtains and hangin's, and so much sufferin' in the world. I should think you'd like to lay 'em away a spell, Dorothy, with the country goin' to the dogs the way it is this year. You can store 'em in our garret if you'd like to."

Dorothy smilingly shook her head.

"And what is that outlandish, square thing in the corner, with flowers painted on to it? It's most too high for a table."

"That is a parlour safe," said Dorothy, "and a very good one, too."

Cousin Delia's spare form stiffened with interest.

"Where he keeps them precious stuns that

belonged to his grandmother?" she asked in an eager, confidential whisper. "I heard Mis' Beals and Mis' Skinner talkin' it over only last week. They said they'd hearn tell there was a necklace with more'n twenty diamonds in it, in the Page family, worth a king's ransom."

"Hardly!" smiled Dorothy.

"And I knowed myself, for certain," Cousin Delia continued impressively, "that Mis' Page had diamond ear-rings give her by her late brother, so big it was vulgar to wear 'em. I wish you'd show 'em to me, Dorothy."

"I am sorry, but I couldn't," she said. "Schuyler locks it, and I haven't the combination."

"Do tell!" said Cousin Delia with acute disappointment. "Well, I'm glad your Cousin Hiram never had no mistrust of *me*. There wa'n't no keys in our house that I didn't carry. There never was nothin' hid away from *me*."

Dorothy preserved a discreet silence, while Cousin Delia rocked violently to and fro.

"What a clutter of books you've got," she began again when she had recovered herself. "The room is fairly choked with 'em. The ragman'll give a good penny for 'em, if you want to clear part of 'em out."

"Oh, no!" interposed Dorothy, "the boys are very fond and proud of them. Some of them

belonged to their great-grandfather and are very valuable. Most of them are Schuyler's of course, but some belong to Tom, and some to Gray. You know the boys would rather deny themselves a dinner than a needed book."

"The boys never denied themselves nothin', as far as I know," said Cousin Delia, "unless mebbe it was Gray. You didn't git the pick o' them brothers, Dorothy. I'm goin' to have my say about it, and there's more'n me thinks so, too."

"You may say it, Cousin Delia," said Dorothy gravely, "but you'll have to find another audience." She was rising from her seat.

"Hoity-toity!" cried Cousin Delia, calmly setting the heel of her stocking. "I never was scared at your airs, Dorothy, and I guess I ain't goin' to begin at this late day. As for Schuyler —here, where be you goin'? I guess you're thinkin' you'd ought to see to the tea, as I don't come very often. Mebbe it ain't none of my business, but I hope you're goin' to have muffins; and somethin' a little hearty wouldn't be bad. It makes one a bit peckish comin' out in the raw air. Of course you're ambitious to do somethin' extra, and I hear Schuyler will have a good cook, if he goes barefoot. Perhaps a little ham 'n' eggs."

Dorothy laughed, ashamed of her irritation, and sat down again.

"There will be something for tea," she said cheerfully. "How is Cousin Hiram?"

This was a safe subject. In this matter she could always trust, and, in a measure, respect and admire Cousin Delia. Whoever else might suffer, there was a certain remorseful memory that forbade any lack of care or comfort for *him*. There was, indeed, pathos in the way she struggled to keep up the delusion, for herself and others, that he was still in possession of all his powers.

"Your Cousin Hiram is doin' uncommon well," she said briskly; "if his legs was as good as his head, he'd be the ekal of any man livin'. He does a deal of thinkin', but, naturally, when he gits through his business he sleeps some to pass away the time. To tell the truth I guess it's as profitable sittin' there as it is to be out turning somersaults with some folks I know, and seein' how far you can make dollars spin over the water."

Cousin Delia nodded with dark significance, but Dorothy went on patiently hemming her table linen, and made no sign.

"You don't want to tell me nothin', Dorothy, that's plain, but there's allus them birds of the air that is ready enough. I hear that king mine —or whatever you call it—has gone higher'n a kite. Is that so, or ain't it?"

"The vein they were working has suddenly given out," said Dorothy composedly.

"And so that *was* the reason you came movin' back so sudden," said Cousin Delia excitedly. "I told Mis' Beals I was sure of it all the time. I suppose you was livin' like kings and queens and knaves down there at Athens, and it comes tough to begin at the foot again. I guess Schuyler is sorry enough, now, that he didn't lay by no umbrel' for a rainy day. Accordin' as they tell me he jest thought his bag of gold hadn't no bottom, and he's been throwin' everything away into those wildcat charities of his. It was bad enough spendin' so much out West, makin' a kind of heathen temple for that queer idol, that Captain of his; but when it come to coverin' a piece of land with gold pieces, makin' a children's playground——" Cousin Delia held up both hands to convey how completely words failed to meet the demands of the occasion. "Now your Cousin Hiram mightn't be no genius, mebbe; but when it comes to a partner fur real life, give me common sense every time."

Still Dorothy made no effort to stem the tide. Cousin Delia, somewhat disappointed, studied her quiet face.

"Some says," she began after a pause, "that Schuyler felt kind 'o tender to children on

account of your little Max that was took away so sudden."

Now, indeed, the quick tears were in Dorothy's eyes; she could not have spoken if she would.

"Let's see, he was two years old, wa'n't he? Pretty nigh the age of Seraphine, although from what I've heard tell, he wa'n't nearly so large of his age. Well, you couldn't help that; and it was hard enough, there ain't no doubt. And that was five years ago, come June. How time does fidget, as the boys used to say! Well, mebbe by this time you see it's for the best. If you've got to be pinched you can stand it better than to see him a-pinin' with you. I hope you didn't have to skimp on a moniment for him. Seraphine's got the biggest stun of any child in Penfield cemetery; there's only one or two grown people that's got bigger ones." She straightened herself with complacent pride.

"Was you calculatin' to put a mor'gage on the house, Dorothy?" she asked, breaking the silence that followed. "Your Cousin Hiram happened to have a hundred or two in the bank, and he was sayin' if it was a first mor'gage, and just to obleege you——"

"There won't have to be any mor'gage on the house," smiled Dorothy.

"I want to know! Well, that's better than

folks thought. We heard he was clean as a picked chicken. I suppose you was very grateful that Mr. Manning give him a place in them lightnin' works down to Penfield Center."

"A place where he is at the very top," said Dorothy with a quick lift of her head, "and has everything under his control."

"Not a partner?" cried Cousin Delia.

"Yes, a full partner; they have been urging it a long time," said Dorothy proudly.

"But he can't be took in, that way, without puttin' in capital," said Cousin Delia, her withered cheeks reddening with sudden anxiety. She could not forgive herself for revealing that idle nest egg in the bank. "I hope he ain't goin' to ask any old friends to put their hard savin's in such cats 'n' dogs."

"He has no need to borrow a cent, if that is what you mean," said Dorothy quietly.

Cousin Delia drew a long breath. "Well, I suppose he'd allus remember that we'd suffered enough by him. There, don't speak, I hain't really laid up nothin' agin him. But Graham was the gentleman of that family. You don't want me to be a hypocrite, do you? I'm a church member, and goin' to be honest the rest of my days. I suppose you seen him quite often after he was called to Athens. Mis' Beals told me about his four thousand dollars' salary,

with prospect of a rise. There'd be some comfort in bein' that man's wife. There ain't no such relish to bread 'n' butter as knowin' it's just as sure to-morrow as it is to-day. I guess you've thought of it now and then. But, my! there's no use cryin' over spilled milk."

"Do I look as if I had been doing much crying?" said Dorothy, lifting her lovely face flushed with happiness. "I think I have chosen the most perfect gentleman, the bravest knight, the kingliest man in all the world!"

"'In the country of the blind the one-eyed men is kings,'" said Cousin Delia sententiously.

Dorothy threw herself back in her chair, laughing irresistibly.

"Ah, I wish Schuyler could have heard it!" she gasped, wiping her eyes. "That was such a clever double thrust, Cousin Delia. You are leaving us both slain with one blow upon the field of battle."

"You allus had your own idees about jokes," said Cousin Delia, eyeing her suspiciously. "I hate people that is allus sittin' in a corner of their own, with the air of pullin' out the biggest kind of a plum that nobody else can't see. Mebbe it's a mercy that poor Mr. Graham didn't get you, after all."

"I am sure of it," said Dorothy, trying to be grave.

"The only weak thing I ever see about him is that he's stayed single all this time. Did you see anythin' of Kitty Beals down to Athens, in that settlement of hers?"

"In the College settlement?" said Dorothy. "Yes, she was working very hard. She is the best, most unselfish girl in the world."

"Well, it's queer about Gray," mused Cousin Delia. "Them Page boys has allus been forward enough in such ways. I believe they began lookin' at pretty girls when they was babies in long clothes. Now there's Tom—runnin' neck 'n' neck with Sam Peters to be a lawyer, and all ready to devour his fellow-creature in another year, they say, though I 'ud never trust him to settle a fight between two roosters——"

"Well, there's Tom," supplied Dorothy, as Cousin Delia seemed to have lost her bearings.

"Yes, there's Tom, with all his way to make, and no more headpiece than Schuyler's."

"His fortune is made if he has half as much," laughed Dorothy. "Well, what is Tom's crime?"

"Mebbe it ain't none of my business," said Cousin Delia mysteriously, "but I guess it's as well you've moved up to look after him a little. I guess he ain't killin' himself studyin' law. And it was only last night Mis' Skinner told me she see him goin' home nigh on to twelve

o'clock, she bein' up with one of Mr. Skinner's headaches."

"I know he came in late," said Dorothy. "He is studying up a difficult case."

"Not so difficult, mebbe, as you think," chuckled Cousin Delia, nodding like a Chinese mandarin. "And I ain't sayin' it would be such a bad thing. Schuyler might rare and tear a little, but there'd be money in it," and Cousin Delia's eyes had the old greedy shine.

"You are speaking in an unknown tongue, Cousin Delia," said Dorothy lightly. "I am all in the dark."

"Well, you're the only one in Penfield," said cousin Delia, enjoying her superiority. "But I ain't no gossip, and Tom might play me some trick for meddlin'. Some boys never fairly grow up. Was you sorry Laura Fallon went in that decline, Dorothy? Though I guess you was never no great friends."

"Oh, yes," said Dorothy gravely. "There was never any unpleasantness between us. I was very sorry."

"Died more'n a year ago. They took it dretful hard, and now Fallon is just wrapped up in the other two. You remember that youngest one, Barbara, don't you, Dorothy?"

"What, little Bab? Yes, I remember her very well, a dear plump little schoolgirl."

"Little schoolgirl!" cried Cousin Delia. "She is eighteen year old if she's a day, and there's some folks could tell you exactly how many more hours 'n' minutes you'd ought to add on." She paused for effect, but Dorothy only stared at her as the most hopeless of sphinxes.

"And she'll be richer'n a crown princess, so Mis' Skinner says. She says Mr. Fallon could spend a dollar every minute of his life, and never touch no principal," said Cousin Delia with bated breath. "He's the richest man in the hull county, and you can't help havin' a pride in Penfield ownin' him. See what he's bringin' to the place. There's the big cotton mills down to the Center, where he's set up that boy of his, Hallett Fallon, you know, Dorothy, that was eddicated in furrin parts. He ain't no older than Schuyler, but they calculate he's worth a million all by himself. They say there's as much as a thousand men workin' in them mills, when everything's goin'. Why, the wages every day must be 'most enough to run the gov'ment. Not that they git overpaid, either; Skinner sees to that. Mr. Hallett, you see, don't take much to hard work, but he's Fallon's only son and the apple of his eye, and so the old man has jest put Skinner in to take the brunt of things. And, my word, he looks like it. He grows homely and gnarly as an old tree struck by

lightnin'. Don't you ever think it was most a pity Schuyler had that fallin' out with Fallon? There's no reason why he shouldn't 'a' had as good a chance as Skinner. Now, there's no call fur you to git so red. I know what you're thinkin', and mebbe I don't understand things very well, but as fur as I can see in that bank business, Fallon and Schuyler was jest a clear case of pot and kittle. We hadn't ought to be Pharisees, Dorothy."

"Tea is ready, Cousin Delia," announced Dorothy somewhat stiffly.

"Do tell! seems as if I'd jest come. You've growed a sight more entertainin' than you used to be. Now, this is fairly sociable," as she sat down to the bright, well-appointed table. "To think that I should ever be takin' tea with you, Dorothy, and you Mrs. Schuyler Page! It does beat all! His ma knew a nice thing when she see it, didn't she?" she said with a devouring glance at the old-fashioned silver tea-pot and milk pitcher.

"They are two hundred years old," said Dorothy with a caressing touch.

"Well, I don't know that it's anything for you to be set up about," said Cousin Delia defiantly. "Suppose the Pages *is* an old family as they're allus braggin', it all comes to the same thing in the end. Their bedroom in the cemetery ain't

no bigger than other people's fur all their wigs and furbelows." She waved her hand to the mantel, where hung the honoured portrait of Schuyler's great-grandfather, in braided queue and ruffled shirt.

"But it almost seems as if you hadn't ought to have the teapot," said Cousin Delia grudgingly. "You've had some great streaks of luck in your life after all, and you've allus been as fond of shinin' things as a crow;" she glanced at the never forgotten ring, sparkling on Dorothy's finger. "And now here Mis' Page must up and die last year. I remember how you took on, but it was one of the best things that could 'a' happened to you. She went just in time. It 'ud 'a' been so different from being mistress of everything yourself."

"I cannot let you say such things, Cousin Delia," cried Dorothy, the indignant tears in her eyes.

"My land!" said Cousin Delia, comfortably taking another muffin, "then I'll only think 'em. You hadn't ought to git stirred up when you're eatin'. I'll take another slice o' that bone' chicken. Don't mind if I'm a bit slow. I see the great Gladstone made a p'int of chawin' every mouthful thirty times, and so I'm a-doin' it, and tryin' to make Hiram. It puts him in a fearful worry, but I'm faithful. Nobody can't

tell how much it may piece on to life, and, judgin' from Gladstone, it must be uncommon good for the brain. What, strawberries at this time o' the year!" she cried with mixed indignation and delight, as Dorothy uncovered a dainty dish. "I call it wasteful, if not sinful."

"Schuyler ordered them for me before he left home," smiled Dorothy.

"It's like his foolishness," said Cousin Delia. "I heerd tell that he was spoilin' you like a baby. Mebbe, too, he wants to make up for some other things that must try you dretful. Now, who is that rough lame creature that is allus hangin' around Schuyler lately? Some says he was with him in them Mexican mines. That comes of goin' off to be different from other folks. It's a pity to git tied up with such cattle; you never can tell when you're done with 'em. They say he has a wife no better'n she should be, and there's a wild monkey of a boy they call Pete, and I don't know how many more."

"He is one of Schuyler's best friends," said Dorothy firmly; "I never can do enough for him. It was he that nursed him night and day after that terrible accident in the mine. I owe him a great debt of happiness."

"He'll see that you pay it, never fear," nodded Cousin Delia. "But put a good face on it—that's your way. And Schuyler, he'll go on with his

head in the air, as if he was walkin' on clouds and had ought to have the stars to play marbles with any time he wanted 'em. That's *his* way."

"Yes, that's his way," said Dorothy joyously. "It's the way of the grandest men the world has ever known. It is a positive stamp of greatness to be cheerful. The whining and fretting people are only advertising how small and weak they are, and that life is too much for them."

"Humph!" said Cousin Delia. "Well, now, I must be goin'. If you want to send some of them little knickknacks to your Cousin Hiram I shouldn't mind carryin' 'em."

"By the way, Dorothy," she said, turning once more at the door, "did you ever see anybody so set up as Uncle Jake and Aunt Patty since they sold that land to the water-works? I never see such airs in all my born days."

"Oh, no," cried Dorothy, "that couldn't be! The dear old souls!"

"'Dear old souls!'" sniffed Cousin Delia. "I wish you could 'a' seen Aunt Patty last winter, with furs every mite as good as Mis' Beals', and her hands crowded into kid gloves, though they're that bony and knuckly that they looked like two bags o' marbles stuffed into her muff. And they've took a seat in church right behind Mis' Fallon's, and bought a new horse and waggin, and are jest spendin' money like water.

I tried to warn her in a friendly way, but oh, my! if you could 'a' seen how uppish she took it!"

"It doesn't seem a bit like her," said Dorothy.

"Well, it was this way," said Cousin Delia. "I jest said in a jokin' way, one day, 'Hain't you ever heard say, Mis' Bender, put a beggar on horseback and he'll ride to the devil?' And would you believe it, she jest smiled in a lofty way, and never said a word—not the first word. Now, that was insultin'. Somebody told me as had ought to know, that you couldn't give a person no more deadly insult than silence."

"Perhaps she couldn't think of anything half so clever to say back," suggested a bland voice behind her.

Cousin Delia started violently with an air of, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?"

"You'll allus be up to your tricks, Tom Page," she said, pinning her shawl for hasty departure.

"Don't hurry," said Dorothy mischievously; "I am going to make Tom confess what he has been doing in such a treacherous and underhand manner."

But Cousin Delia gathered her skirts for instant flight.

"''Ave mercy on the herring one,'" murmured Tom, as he gallantly ran to open the gate.

CHAPTER II.

A MORBID CONSCIENCE.

"So we are to be neighbours again," said Mr. Beals, giving Schuyler a hearty shake of the hand as he came out of the Penfield Center Bank. "I am glad to have so much youth and enterprise coming back to the town, but am sorry to hear that you have met with reverses."

"Don't waste your sympathy," said Schuyler gaily. "Our Sultan has been a little freaky and disappointing like all of the name, but we are still working the mine; there may be another pleasant surprise almost any time."

"Glad to hear it, but—I beg your pardon, I speak as a friend—I hope you have salted down something comfortable for yourself and pretty wife."

"Not much, I'm afraid," said Schuyler with undaunted cheer, "but I am not a pauper. The electric plant promises well, and I have the

royalty on one or two inventions already on the market. Perhaps it is a good thing for the ingrained idleness in every man's nature that there is some spur of necessity to keep him from retrograding—from loss of unused power. Yes, I believe 'work is every man's life preserver.' Perhaps my head is the long lost Aladdin's lamp; but nothing will come out unless necessity rubs it."

"All the same, when it does come out," smiled Mr. Beals, "I hope the man Schuyler Page will not continue to be as quixotic as the boy. You cannot afford to throw fortunes away every day. And what is more,—I have often wanted to talk this over with you, Schuyler,—you are not going to get on as well with your fellow-men if you set up impossible ideals, and do not show a little more practical common sense."

Schuyler raised his eyebrows.

"You must take it in good part, my dear fellow," continued Mr. Beals heartily. "I have always liked you, and I have long been meaning to tell you frankly that men of business, men of legitimate success, look upon you at times as perilously near the quixotism of a fanatic. You were very generous, certainly, in making that restitution, but there was no moral obligation. Instead of being a question of honour, it was simply a question of a morbid conscience."

Schuyler flushed. "I have a confession to make to you," he began.

"Wait," said Mr. Beals; "I do not pretend to understand all that complication of ten years ago. But if Mr. Fallon was the villain you thought him,—mind I do not call him so, there are many sides to every question: he is known to most of us as one of our most public-spirited and prosperous citizens; I, myself, have never had time to balance the accusations against him,—but, granting all your premises, there was a certain justice in forcing that stock back upon a man who had tried to swindle you in the first place."

"Perhaps he had not," interrupted Schuyler. "Let us look at it from your point of view. The bonds must have had a certain value when he sold them to my mother. He was not certain till much later of brother-in-law Clymer's defalcations. Probably he greatly preferred that they should remain valuable. But, in the end, he only felt, as I did, that if there was any risk, if the money must be lost, it was desirable that anybody—no matter who—should lose it rather than himself. No, I don't know that any business man in Penfield could reasonably find fault with him."

"Not if he sold in good faith," persisted Mr. Beals, nevertheless with some irritation. "I

tell you, Schuyler, we must be careful about setting up an unreasonable standard. The honour of our time is a weak quality at best. It needs coaxing, not frightening with hopeless demands. Every sane man holds it true that he has a perfect right to sell stock of which he is uncertain."

"Yes," said Schuyler, his grave, troubled eyes fixed searchingly on Mr. Beals' face. "But how when you know that it is perfectly worthless? For instance,—I make no effort to shield myself,—in this transaction under consideration, I sold upon two certainties. First, I knew as well as Mr. Fallon that the stock wasn't worth the paper it was printed on. Second, I was equally sure that he would immediately sell it to some poor victim not yet as enlightened as himself. We both unloaded with positive knowledge, he directly and I indirectly. That made all the difference between innocence and blameworthiness—this positive knowledge."

"No," said Mr. Beals obstinately. "I pass no judgment on Mr. Fallon, but with your convictions the selling was right. Your only error was in not going forth straightway, and warning all possible victims. You should have spread the news far and near. Then the loss would have fallen where it was deserved, and the massacre of the innocents have been

averted. Why under the heavens didn't you do that?"

"Some boyish code of honour perhaps," said Schuyler with a clouded face. "Some feeling that next to the shame of eaves-dropping was the ignominy of babbling. And perhaps—perhaps"—with his transparent candour—"I was a coward. I can hardly analyse all the thoughts of that chaotic time. Mr. Fallon was a great power, to my young imagination. By some clever manipulation the crisis might still be averted for months, and I arrested for a meddlesome, libelling fool, for I could not even swear in any court of justice that it was positively he upon the city-hall steps. I did not see his face. But in nothing," he resumed, after a pause, "was I honest with myself; I dared not allow myself to think. Somebody was sure to suffer, but I shut my eyes tight. I hoped it might be the famous mandarin in China, who would never appear to shake his gory locks at me in any of the ordinary walks of life. But when it fell upon my nearest and dearest——"

"Why, yes," interjected Mr. Beals, "then, of course, it was most noble and honourable to——"

"Why, of course?" exclaimed Schuyler with an impatient toss of his head. "What do your creeds mean by teaching that every man is your brother? How do you reconcile it with your

conscience to have one code for the brother under your own roof, and another for the mandarin, whoever he may be? The Church has its heroes, good and true. God forbid that I should doubt it when it can boast such men as Dr. Peters, the Captain, and my brother Gray"—he spoke with emotion. "But why is the real thing—the everyday life—so often choked under millineries and mummeries? Why does she grow so slowly? Why, as the Midianite caravan of the world passes by, are there strangely familiar echoes from the rude forefathers bartering a weeping lad on the hot Syrian plain? 'Let us sell him . . . for he is our brother.' Yes, that is it!" he said, with a superb disdain; "the famous of this world, hitherto, have been those who have gone forth saying, 'What can I take from my brother?' All history shows it. That is sane and reasonable; a man you can understand, whose brain-power you can respect. But the man who weakly says, 'What can I give to my brother?' is simply a quixotic fool."

"Don't get heated, Schuyler," said Mr. Beals soothingly. "Perhaps you are only a little ahead of your time. I don't want to fight your ideas. I suppose honour is really 'sublimated honesty,' as somebody has put it; but, don't you see, the age isn't quite ready for it. It is out of

working harmony. It is better fitted to that far-off millennium we are all longing for, but can hardly hope to see. And I still hold," he added, laughing, "that in the present stage of the world you would be rather a dangerous partner, and need some pretty reliable balance wheel. There are a great many ways of looking at a thing, you know, and men—good men, too—may honestly differ."

"It is quite a relief to me to find you so lenient, Mr. Beals," said Schuyler with a dangerous shine in his eyes. "I have a confession still to make to you that may prove that my brain is not so unworthy your respect as you think. Do you know, if I had not succeeded in selling that stock to Mr. Fallon, I should next have attempted to sell it to you?"

"Ah!" said Mr. Beals, colouring indignantly, "that would have been quite another thing."

"Naturally, from your point of view," said Schuyler with a faint smile. "As near as I can remember I put the case to myself something after this fashion: It would not be like selling to a helpless woman or boy. I had heard you say a dozen times that 'everybody must look out for himself in a man's world.' I was fond of quoting the phrase. You wouldn't thank anybody to do your thinking for you, you said; you wanted no favours or coddling. You could be

your own night-watchman. So, as I thought, if you came to any trouble, you might know how to manage the scamps far better than I, and as I also knew that—in case of utter loss—a few thousand dollars more or less would only be a temporary inconvenience to you, while the lack would be the wreck of my life, of the two evils I promptly chose the least."

"I couldn't have believed it of you, Schuyler!" said Mr. Beals, wiping his disconcerted face.

Schuyler frowned with the stress of the never forgotten struggle.

"You see the heavens were falling in my boy-world," he said. "I saw nothing clearly in my selfish panic. It was a most unreal time. Every thought was a mental acrobat and juggler. It is a great pain to me to recall it. Perhaps it was the knowledge of this farther intention that afterward so overwhelmed me and made me feel that as long as I was determined somebody else should lose this money—no matter who—it made no particular difference with *my* accountability whether I sold to a rogue or an honest man. In fact it seemed worse, in some respects, to sell to Mr. Fallon than to you. Should you have thought it right if I had asked him to sell my stock for me?"

"Certainly not," said Mr. Beals promptly.

"I could not see the great difference," said

Schuyler. "In vain I tried to flatter myself that I could not have had the heart to sell to Uncle Jake and the like. Knowing Mr. Fallon's unscrupulousness, had I not really taken every risk, and—holding my peace—become, as the lawyers would say, an accomplice, accessory to the deed?"

"These are too fine points for me, Schuyler," said Mr. Beals shortly, his face still mottled with indignation. "If your brother Tom can juggle words as you can, he'll be the biggest lawyer ever raised in Penfield. But it would have been a rascally thing to sell that stock to me, sir."

"I am disappointed," said Schuyler gravely. "I hoped you would see that upon one occasion I was quite as practical as any man."

Dr. Peters came slowly up with a warm handshake for Schuyler, but the two men scarcely noticed him.

"You must have your joke, I suppose," said Mr. Beals, "but you have persisted in misunderstanding me all the way through."

"I hope so," said Schuyler impetuously. "And I shall conclude that in all future personal transactions, even as a business man, you would prefer that I should retain my morbid conscience. You need not fear; I have had my lesson. My fellow-creatures are much safer

with me than they were ten years ago. For," he added, drawing up his tall, graceful figure, "at all charge of priggishness and fanaticism, I am going to hold on to this idiocy, sir, in this age of moral confusion; in this age which is fast becoming memorable for the increase of riches and the decay of men."

"He is like his own electricity," said Mr. Beals, colouring hotly, but forcing a laugh as he turned to Dr. Peters. "One must handle him with care. If one should get hold of his positive and negative poles at the same moment, it might be instant death."

Dr. Peters had quickly surmised the subject under discussion, one which had been hotly debated from time to time the last ten years, and which, in men's minds, had proved as revealing and separating as Ithuriel's spear.

"We must hear all sides, Mr. Beals," he said in gentle apology. "And we must remember that some things that were foolishness to the brilliant Greeks became afterward the gold mine of the world."

"He must side with Schuyler inevitably," was Mr. Beals' somewhat ungenerous comment to himself. "It is common gratitude. Even a good man can be bought with a trip to Europe."

Then pulling himself together, he added pleasantly enough, "I hardly expected to be

classed with those Greek outsiders, but Dr. Peters ought to know."

"Ah, no!" cried Schuyler, holding out his hand with a quick humility that was more true and genuine than the mood of scorn and satire that had lately possessed him. "Forgive me, Mr. Beals. It is I that am a stupid, blundering outsider in almost everything that is good. Dr. Peters," he said, turning with his rare, magnetic smile, "considers my coat too suspicious to be trusted in the fold. Well, I confess I cannot grasp the deep mysteries of the creeds. I sometimes wonder if I could have any place in that far future when the city comes down from heaven with no temple therein. What do you think of that idea of Drummond's, Dr. Peters," he said slyly, "that the city is more permanent than the church? that the saint of the future will be the good citizen rather than the good churchman?"

"He will be the good citizen because he has first been the good churchman," cried Dr. Peters, "and there will be no temple in that city, because every man will be a perfect little temple himself. And to that building we need all the church scaffolding of the present, as I am sure Drummond says. But I don't know where we can put you, Schuyler," he said indulgently, for he loved him as his own son. "Per-

haps there must always be an outside tribe—a tribe of Abou Ben Adhem—may it still increase —to which such an Arab as you must belong."

"I should like nothing better," said Schuyler, his fine face in a glow. "'Write me as one who loves his fellow-men.'"

"What, all of them?" said Mr. Beals significantly, as Mr. Fallon's form, grown portly with years, loomed up at the end of the street.

Schuyler's ingenuous face was a study.

"You have caught me," he said briefly. "I renounce all claim."

"I should not despair of you, Schuyler, if you were put to the test," laughed Dr. Peters. "It is much if in the demands of justice and honesty alone, you still love your neighbour as yourself."

Schuyler shrugged his shoulders, and made no response.

"Well, good-morning," said Mr. Beals, looking hastily at his watch, "I came near forgetting that meeting of directors. You know, I suppose, that I have an interest in the Banner Mills?"

"With the Fallons. Yes, I heard that my old schoolmate, Hallett, was far on the road to the paradise of millionaires. So it is a syndicate?"

"Yes, but of course Mr. Fallon holds the

lion's share, and is the controlling power. We are more than willing to have it so. There is a mint of money in the plant already. I am in a little deeper, myself, than I really meant to go," he said thoughtfully. "But it is all right. That man is a King Midas in the world of business; whatever he touches turns into gold. In our community, and I may say in Athens, also, he is recognised as a leader of men."

"I wish well to all that may follow his lead," said Schuyler stiffly. "It will not be I."

"You would not be averse to leading yourself, eh?" laughed Mr. Beals. "But every man in his order. Such financial ability as Fallon's amounts to genius. Indeed I think it is more rare than any other form of genius, and must always give a man a certain supremacy. Explain it as you will, Schuyler Page, Heaven seems to prosper him in every undertaking."

"Heaven!" exclaimed Schuyler. "Don't profane the word by such a connection."

The three men laughed good-naturedly, and went their separate ways.

CHAPTER III.

QUO HONOR DUCIT.

SCHUYLER had not gone far when he was overtaken by the awkward, shambling figure of "Lame Joe."

"I'm afeerd you think I hadn't ought to have followed you up, Mr. Schuyler," he said with the wistful, hungry look sometimes seen in the eyes of an animal. "If I'm goin' to be a weight and a clog on you in these parts, you must jest say the word. But I got lonesome like, and so homesick to see you that I couldn't stand it no longer. I was hangin around more'n a month in Athens, catchin' sight of you now and then. But I wouldn't bother you till you got moved over. I wasn't goin' to make you ashamed in a great, fine city like that."

"Why, Joe!" cried Schuyler, taking his big hand in the warmest clasp. "What are you talking about, man? You couldn't make me

ashamed of you anywhere. You and I are the best of friends for life—for life, Joe, always remember that."

Great tears stood in the honest eyes, but he went on deprecatingly:

"I didn't know but mebbe you thought I'd ought to have stuck to the minin'. But thirty year is a long time to spend down in the dark, and I wanted to see a little of God's sunshine before I died. Then Almiry was an Eastern girl, and wanted to see her folks once more. But, law, that's allus a risky, disappointin' thing to do. Part of 'em was dead and gone, and part didn't seem to make much of her; and so we've jest drifted here with our little family. And here I'd be proud and glad to stay, if I could really be some use about the works. If not, jest say the word."

"The greatest in the world, Joe," said Schuyler heartily, "the very man I want. How much of a family have you got, Joe?"

"We've buried four, Mr. Schuyler," said Joe simply, "and now there's only the oldest and the youngest. There's young Pete,—named after one of the men that was down with us,—an uncommon peart boy, keen as a briar, and I've been lucky enough to get him in for errand boy at the Banner Mills."

"How old is he?" asked Schuyler.

"Thirteen year, last January," said Joe, his eyes glued to the ground.

"Thirteen!" exclaimed Schuyler. "Why, I didn't know you were a married man, Joe, when I was at the mines ten years ago."

"No more I wasn't," said Joe, still with downcast eyes, and violently twisting a wisp of hair. "But mebbe I'd ought to have been. There was a little woman I'd knowed a good while—well, there was a good many of us livin' that way," he stammered painfully. "We didn't think it was much harm, but after we got to knowin' the Cap'n and you—well, Mr. Schuyler, it was just here," finished Joe desperately, "*Quo honor ducit.*"

"What!" cried Schuyler, surprise and kindly humour struggling in his eyes. "I didn't know you were such a scholar, Joe."

"I'm afeerd," said Joe, still in a very downcast way, "you're thinkin' I'd oughtn't to take such liberties with them powerful words, but they've been a great comfort to me, and more of us besides. I'll tell you how it was. Can I walk with you a bit, Mr. Schuyler?"

They were on the road back to Penfield. The dynamo works at the Center were shut down for some important repairs. This was one of Schuyler's rare holidays which he was hastening to spend with Dorothy, more eager for that dear

companionship, if such a thing could be, than in the days when they had first set out on life's journey hand in hand. There were still pictures to be hung, and books to be arranged in the dear old home to which they had returned, and, after a morning of busy work, which would be, after all, the most utter play, they were going to wander away as free as the birds in the intoxication of the budding spring, taking little runs now and then into the greater fairy-land of each other's minds, still full of wonder and surprise. He had a new invention struggling to the birth. Dorothy would be so quick to see all the beauty and power of it, and also so suggestive in her criticism. They studied eagerly the same works; the "little brother" was never a step behind. He trembled sometimes when he thought how intensely he loved her, how completely the little comrade had filled his life. Could it last? "All mortal love is guarded by a fear."

But Joe was waiting. Surely he could stay his eager steps, and spare a few moments for the tale he was so anxious to disclose.

"Yes, come on, old fellow," he said. "We haven't fairly had a good talk about the old camp since you came."

"Well, this is what I was goin' to say," said Joe, hopping beside him. "Arter you'd been

out there and built the dinin'-room and the libery, the people growed more and more what you might call respectable, every day, and a bit offish with their old selves. They was cleaner, and not nigh so rough—leastways Sundays, when they could go into that bloomin' room and order up their vittles like a gentleman. You was right, Mr. Schuyler, in chargin' them ten cents for that dinner. It saved their feelin's, for they was no paupers. Fur 's I know, any kind of a man that's good fur anything hates a person to give him charity. Give him work, Mr. Schuyler, and save the man that's in him. It's cruel to make a man into a pauper that any beast goin' huntin' for his own food can look down upon."

Schuyler nodded. "You are right, Joe."

"But that's neither here nor there; I only wanted to tell you how the thing heartened 'em up, and how the men got to likin' a clean shirt on a Sunday, and how after dinner, I've knowed 'em time after time to go streamin' up to that green bit where we'd raised the Cap'n's stun. You'd like to see 'em spellin' it over and over again about that love greater than any man's. And it made them thoughtful like, and now and then they'd do a soft, kind thing that 'ud surprise you. You see they took a pride in the Cap'n, when they come to think it over, and every Jack of 'em feels bigger because such a

man come down out of the big world and lived every day right alongside of 'em.

"But that ain't what I was goin' to say, arter all," said Joe, scratching his puzzled head. "There was the dinin'-room and the libery—oh, yes! I was goin' to tell you that they didn't take to the libery so much at first, but they're growin' that way more 'n' more. You'll even begin to see a man down in the mine, now and then, with a little book in his hand, tryin' to read a bit, as he's eatin' his dinner. And you'd ought to see 'em swagger in of a Sunday, and look over the gay bindin's, and settle themselves comfortable if it is a bad day, and look as if they felt somehow that all the learnin' was a-soakin' into 'em. And the women and children is a sight happier for it. It's such a pretty painted place—you come away, you know, before they had quite finished the libery. And, there now, I am just comin' round to where I started. You remember Josef Morelli's wife?"

"Oh, how could I forget her—a good, kind woman," said Schuyler.

"Yes," said Joe judicially, "but ignorant, as who wouldn' be that thought that little wooden doll over her bed could do all that she asked it to."

"Oh, she had prayers that went farther than that, I am sure, Joe," laughed Schuyler.

"Mebbe, but did you ever miss any of your belongin's, Mr. Schuyler? say a very, very old little book, with a queer picture pasted in the front, with some queer words, and your name, Schuyler Page, writ in the year sixteen hundred and something? It give me a turn when I first see it, for I knew you couldn't 'a' lived no such time."

Schuyler laughed heartily. "I never missed it, Joe, but I remember I took with me an old copy of Izaak Walton,—a great fisherman, you know,—and it had belonged to my great-great-grandfather. I believe I should be glad to see it again."

"I've got it in my box," said Joe. "I'd ought to have sent it to you before, for I've had it quite a spell, but I've allus been meanin' to come on with it myself. Now, Mis' Morelli, she stole that from you, Mr. Schuyler, and hid it away as secret as the grave. She thought the figure in front was some kind of saint, and the words was a holy charm such as she hangs about them skinny children's necks. But one day, when some gentlemen was goin' through the mines, there was a young priest and a scolard come with 'em, and she took him off by himself to show him the treasure, and find out the worth of it. And didn't she get laughed at for her pains! He told her the pictur' was no saint at

all, but jest a head of some kind of a soldier on an arm-coat, I think he called it."

"Could it have been a coat of arms, Joe?" asked Schuyler, with what gravity he could, "with the head of a knight, the visor half raised?"

"I calculate you're right, Mr. Schuyler," said Joe eagerly. "Of course you'd know about it. But he said the words on it was good and true. *Quo honor ducit*,—'Where honour leads,—he said the soldier was sayin'; and I learned 'em by heart, and so, I can tell you, has many a man, woman, and child in the camp. Fur I'll tell you how it was. Mr. Schuyler, since you've been out there, and spoken so kind, and done everything so handsome by 'em, they've set jest about as much store by you as they have by the Cap'n. No, don't interrupt, Mr. Schuyler; let me finish the story. And they took an uncommon likin' to them words. They made 'em think of the Cap'n, and that book o' his full of the hen scratches. They liked the learnin' of it. It made 'em feel big to think they understood it. And when the priest told 'em your family all wanted to be soldiers, ready to go through thick and thin, where honour leads, it just seemed to tickle their fancy. So what did they do but send for a master painter from the States, and have him make a paintin' in great gold letters on

the wall over the books, clear aross the hull end of the libery. There was 'Captain Max' on one side and 'Schuyler Page' on the other, and *Quo honor ducit* in the middle. Oh, it looked brave!"

"Is that so, Joe?" cried Schuyler, greatly moved. "I am not worthy of such partnership."

"The men's heads was level," said Joe. "They wouldn't have it any other way. And now they're takin' such pride in them words, that you can see 'em standin' straighter, as you might say, every day. Mis' Morelli, she came bringin' the book back to me, a-cryin,' and sayin' she'd been a thief; and, first and last, there's been no end of stolen chickens come back to their old roost. Old scores has been settled, and I"— Joe hesitated again, his face all aflame—"I'd been feelin' mean enough a long time, and them words jest worked on me till, when that priest came over again, next year, I jest let him marry me to the little woman; and I hain't been sorry. Though I've been worse than a coward about tellin' of it," said Joe, his pained eyes wandering everywhere but on Schuyler's face. "I'm afeerd I've fell with you farther than I can easy climb up again in this life."

"Joe, old fellow, who am I that I should con-

demn you?" cried Schuyler, again grasping the horny hand. "The old Joe is dead and buried. Let him rest in peace. The Joe standing here, whom I am proud to know, is my firm and fast friend."

"Forever 'n' ever, Mr. Schuyler!" said Joe thickly.

"And you have given me a great gratification," said Schuyler warmly. "I feel as if I had touched one of the goals of life. It is a rare pleasure to think of those words shining out in the darkness of Camp Dynamo."

"Yes, and they do shine, Mr. Schuyler. The men wanted a good job and the best of gold is in 'em. You can almost see 'em in the night. And you'd laugh to see what a heap more they think of them than if they was English. Mis' Morelli hain't quite give up yet that there's a power in 'em. Morelli has painted 'em for her on bits of paper, and she's sewed them up in silk bags to hang around all them black little necks."

"It won't do them any harm," laughed Schuyler.

"It's wonderful what a brood she's got," continued Joe, "and mine mostly had to die. There was two little girls, and young Joe, named after me, and a boy that I made free to call Cap'n Max. Oh, I'm a blunderin' beast, Mr.

Schuyler! How could I forgit your own little boy—so promisin', they tell me, and your only one. It was the will of God, Mr. Schuyler," stammered the unhappy Joe.

"Yes," said Schuyler simply, his mouth stern and set with the effort at self-control. "And how old is your baby, Joe?"

"There it is, Mr. Schuyler," said Joe gloomily. "There is some livin' troubles almost worse'n death. He is goin' on to two year, but we hain't never called him anything else but 'baby.' He's got a trouble with his spine, and his little legs have never growed, and they ain't a-goin' to grow. But if you could see his eye, Mr. Schuyler, you'd see he knowed twice as much as his own grandfather. It's a shame we hain't christened him yit, but we felt as if most people 'ud think it a liberty to make use of their name for a cripple. There's no compliment into it, and we both felt delicate."

"If my poor name would be any use to the baby, he is welcome to it," said Schuyler heartily.

Joe stared, open-mouthed. "You can't mean it, Mr. Schuyler; you hain't thought—it 'ud be takin' an advantage of you—your honourable name! Why, that 'ud make up to the baby for everything."

"I tell you the little man is welcome to it, if it will do him any good," said Schuyler with his

radiant smile. "And he should be equally welcome if he were a humpback or an idiot. What are friends good for?"

"Oh, Mr. Schuyler!" gulped Joe in a passion of adoring gratitude, and leaning up against the fence, he burst into tears.

"Don't let us have any nonsense, Joe," said Schuyler, taking him by the arm. "See, we have just reached a spot I was meaning to show you. This is a place where I hope little Schuyler will often come to play."

"Little Schuyler!" repeated Lame Joe, fairly dazed. "No, I couldn't. It isn't for such as me to have the pick of things."

"It is all settled, Joe; we won't talk about it any more. Look at the children. Isn't that a pretty sight?"

Joe leaned upon the gate, and looked with admiration upon the sweep of green grass, with here and there beds of bright tulips just bursting into bloom. About halfway between Penfield and Penfield Center three or four acres of ground had been enclosed with a low railing. There were pretty green paths straying everywhere of their own sweet will. There were cleared spaces at one end for ball-games, for tennis and croquet. In another corner was a great heap of sand, where the smallest children were busy with little carts, building miniature

cities that soon fell to ruins with the united shouts of rosy defendants and conquerors. It was charming to see the grave eyes and pursed lips of some of the young workers, the air of painstaking fidelity with which they pursued their delightful toil, finding the day only too short for the loading of the small waggons, and the triumphant dumping of them only a few feet away.

"You see I am raising artists and sculptors," laughed Schuyler, pointing to a curly-headed boy, who had brought water from the central fountain in an old tin can, and moistening the sand, was moulding animals that surely were not the likeness of anything in the heavens above or earth beneath. But the boundless imagination of an admiring small crowd filled out the outlines to the young showman's perfect satisfaction, as he gravely announced the titles :

"This is the cow that jumped over the moon. These are the four-and-twenty blackbirds that were baked in the king's pie."

In another corner was a pretty little cottage through whose open door, as they strolled along, they could see children, tired of the rougher play, sitting at small tables, weaving the bright-colored mats of the fascinating kindergarten work. A white-haired, sweet-faced woman was gently ordering all, and encouraging the most blundering little fingers.

"That is Miss Brown," said Schuyler; "a poor sewing woman who so nearly cried her eyes out with some troubles she had that she was forced to give up all her fine embroideries. A lucky thing for me, though, as she fits into this place as if she had been made for it. She and a crippled brother of hers live in the cottage, keep order among the children, and take care of the whole grounds."

"Yes, the hull place is in apple-pie order," said Joe with staring eyes. "And I never see anything jest like it before. Why, it ain't made jest for rich people; there's ragged children and barefoot children and every kind."

"Yes, it is open to everything that can lay claim to the name of a child," said Schuyler, his gaze fixed on the sweet eyes of a brave little picture that hung over the mantel. "It has been a delight to Mrs. Page and myself to plan it. Poor little pilgrims! Life is nothing but a desert to most of them, especially the children of those mill hands. I have been determined that, now and then, they should come to a well and twelve palm-trees. And here you must bring little Schuyler and his mother. He can play in the sand and make mats."

"And be jest as happy as them little ones that's took and a-sittin' down in Paradise," said Joe, his voice husky with emotion.

Just then a boy shot by them swiftly as a deer, pursued closely by shouting comrades.

"I declare for it, that's my kid," cried Lame Joe, "and he hain't no kind of business here at this time o' day. He'll be losin' his place. Pete! Pete! Here, you limb!" he cried, shaking his stick.

Pete came back shortly, breathless and triumphant, hugging a paper box somewhat crushed in the combat. He was a thin, loose-jointed boy with a freckled face, a shock of tousled sandy hair, and a nose turned up at a comical angle, but with a pair of big, sunny, devil-may-care blue eyes that went far toward redeeming the discreditable points, and making him a personage to be propitiated and respected. A small mongrel, black and-tan dog had also emerged from the dust of the conflict, and stood panting beside him.

"I ain't sneakin', dad," he cried breathlessly. "I'm on an errant to Penfield, and just looked in a minute to give 'em a p'int on the game. Then a feller snaked my box away, and——"

"Hush!" cried Lame Joe sternly. "Hain't you got no manners? Here's the biggest friend I ever had, or any man ever had or could have, and I was wantin' to interdoose you, if you wasn't such a tough I'm clean ashamed of you."

The boy looked up admiringly at the tall

form towering above him, and recognising the *bonhomie* of the smile, irresistible as the sunshine, pulled off his cap with a bow that nearly shut him up like a clasp knife. The dog meanwhile, quite unsolicited, was licking his hand with violent wagging of his stumpy tail.

"Toni likes him!" cried Pete with acute delight. "Toni don't make no mistakes!" And from that moment he was ready to lay all his fealty and devotion at Schuyler's feet.

"Mis' Morelli give him the pup," explained Joe, "and he's brought him all the way from the mines. He likes him a heap better'n his mother 'n' me."

"I foresee that Pete and Toni and I are going to be the best of friends," said Schuyler with a delightful air of comradeship. "And now I must hurry on, Joe. Somebody is wondering what has become of me. Be sharp at the works to-morrow, I shall need you all day."

"Never fear!" cried Lame Joe. "Did you hear that, Pete?" he said, turning proudly. "He needs me!"

"Ain't he a tall one, though!" said young Pete enviously, looking after him. "I'll bet he's six foot two. And my, how he walks! I'll bet I could keep up to him, though. I'm goin' that way."

Lame Joe laid on him a strong detaining arm.

"You wouldn't be thinkin' of thrustin' yourself on him for company?" he cried indignantly. "I'm ashamed o' your cheek. Why, that's Mr. Page. Do you take it in? Mr. Schuyler Page, that I've allus been tellin' you about, that did the big thing for us out in the mines. And now he's doin' jest as much for the boys 'n' girls right here in Penfield. Why, he'd give away his right hand if somebody didn't watch him. Don't you remember the *Quo honor ducit* in the libery, Pete? Well, he's it; leastways, in my mind, his name and the *honor* of it is jest about the same thing. I won't say anything agin your followin' him that way, Pete, jest as close as you're a mind to. What you got in that box?"

"Them's roses from Mr. Fallon's glass house," said the impatient boy. "Mr. Hallett's a-sendin' 'em to Mis' Page with his compilements, or sunthin' like that."

"Well, that's odd," said Lame Joe, looking puzzled. "I should think Mr. Page 'ud rather raise his own flowers. But mebbe they're goin' to trim a church, or somethin' like that."

"I guess it ain't no church," said Pete, his wide mouth describing a semicircle. "He's sent 'em before. I guess he's sweet on Mis' Page."

Lame Joe promptly took Pete by the coat collar, and shook him till his teeth chattered.

"I'm blamed if I know what that's fur," said Pete, rubbing a knuckle across his eyes. "I guess it ain't no harm likin' Mis' Page. Everybody likes her, and I like her, and I should think you would."

"So I do," panted Lame Joe, casting about in some embarrassment for a satisfactory explanation. "I guess it was sassy, don't you see, to be makin' so free with her name. Mebbe I didn't quite sense your meanin'. Here, don't be layin' up anythin' agin your old dad." He fished in his capacious pockets. "Here's a bright new nickel I've been savin' up for you."

The April cloud swept swiftly from young Pete's shining face.

"All right. I'm off," he said, squaring himself, and flinging the box musket-wise across his shoulder. "Fall in, Toni! Right foot, left foot—march!" and he swung away, pausing at the turn of the road to fling back a mischievous wink.

"*Quo honor ducit!*" he cried.

CHAPTER IV.

A NEW HORIZON.

"Is the choir rehearsal over so early, Miss Barbara? What an unexpected pleasure!" said Tom Page, overtaking with light step a slender figure coming out of the pretty Gothic chapel. "May I walk home with you?"

The young girl hesitated. "I don't know, Mr. Page; papa——"

"Yes, I just left papa in Penfield Center, talking over the bad times with Mr. Beals and the rest, and deciding, I suppose, whether it is best to shut down the Banner Mills. Come, let us go home by way of the river. It is early yet; see, the sun has but just left his throne-room and hasn't fairly dragged his court train out of the sky."

"I don't know that it is quite right," began the girl uneasily. "You know papa——"

"Ah, don't let us waste such a heavenly evening talking about right and wrong. There are

so many better subjects. Come, Bab ! " he said pleadingly, " we don't often have such a chance. We don't want to lay up remorse for our whole future lives. Come, Bab ! Oh, I beg your pardon ! 'Bab' comes so natural. One can't always remember that you are grown up."

" You had better be respectful," said the girl, laughing and blushing, pacing, nevertheless, not unwillingly through the sweet-scented paths that led to the river—the enchanted river, faithfully trying to repeat the deep rosy sea of the sky against which was cut sharply the silver shallop of the young May moon.

" I have been studying in such a beastly way over those dry law books all day, that I felt a perfect hunger for the fine arts," said Tom. " Will you forgive me if I look for a few minutes at your eyes ? "

" If you are impertinent," cried the girl, " I shall go back immediately."

Tom made abject apologies, but fell from grace the next minute.

" Just listen to the Peabody bird, Bab—Miss Barbara ! He is on his way up to the northern woods. One very seldom hears him now. It is really time all the family were in the nest and the front door shut, but one partner seems to be roaming—probably Mrs. Peabody gone out to vote. Hear him call over and over : 'Oh,

come home, home, home, Peabody, Peabody, Peabody!' and listen, there is the far-off answer: 'Yes, my sweet, sweet, sweet!' Can't you distinguish the very words? Happy Peabody!"

"Tom Page, you are a goose!" cried Barbara. And then the two light-hearted young creatures laughed till they had to wipe away the tears.

"One really has to make a painful effort," she continued, when she had recovered herself, "to remember that Mr. Fletcher considers you a promising young lawyer. And it quite passes belief that you should make a creditable success as an author besides. Did you get my note yesterday?"

"About that little skit in the *Pacific?* Oh, didn't I? It did me a world of good! It was board, lodging, and going out to day's work to me," said Tom fervently.

"I won't say anything more unless you are sensible," pouted Barbara. "I was trying to tell you that it was the best thing you had ever done, and I hoped there would be no more of those hateful things those newspaper men have been so glad to say about you. I know they must see their mistake by this time."

"Ah, yes, Bab—Miss Barbara—on account of the transcendent merit of that last article, the soulless critic has been forced, in spite of him-

self, to throw away his cayenne pepper, caustic, and oil of vitriol, and, with trembling haste, weave me a crown of laurel."

Barbara tossed her piquant little head. "I was told by very good authority that the editors were quite carried away with it, but I begin to think there must have been some mistake."

"I cannot tell a lie," said Tom, with grave candour. "It already has a transatlantic reputation. I have translated it myself into the Chinese language, and the editors are upsetting it into the Yak and Tapir dialects, and considering a proposition for the Gorilla."

Barbara walked on in dignified silence.

"What were you saying, Miss Barbara?" said Tom, after a while, with immense deference.

"It must make a great difference to you what I could say," said Barbara stiffly. "You are quite capable of doing your own talking. What can a canary do who has just heard a mocking bird sing twenty different songs in a minute?"

"And the whole of them not worth one note of the canary," said Tom penitently.

"I did think of making one remark," said Barbara demurely.

"Most humble and hearty thanks!" cried Tom.

"'My heart would hear it and beat,
Had it lain for a century dead.'"

"I heard somebody say that if you ever became a star——"

"Ah!" cried Tom, with clasped hands.

"It would be in the Milky Way," finished Barbara, with delightful triumph.

"Miss Barbara," cried Tom solemnly, "do you know that you use a smokeless and noiseless powder in your conversations that is cruelty itself? It is frightful to have death steal up, as it were, in slippers. One is utterly annihilated before even suspecting danger."

There was another burst of inextinguishable laughter, and then Tom tucked her little hand masterfully under his arm. The twilight had deepened. One or two stars were beginning to appear in the paling rose-emerald sky. The sweet mystery of night was fast growing about them. The soft rustle of myriads of little hidden lives came to them from grass and tree-trunks. Out upon the dim river a boat was drifting by, with twang of a guitar, and a wistful song floating on the breeze, soft, intangible as a musical ghost.

The mood of the two young creatures changed. For several minutes they walked without a word beneath the shadowy fringe of trees. At last Tom desperately broke the silence, which a little movement of Barbara's hand warned him might be growing embarrassing.

"Did you ever look up at the sky, Bab, and look, and look? Did you ever think what a grand thing it was to have always about us? Did you ever notice the immense fall of blue from the zenith to the horizon? Everything else dwindles into insignificance before it. Niagara is but a child's dam in a stream."

"But those vast spaces are lonesome, after all," said Barbara, with a shiver. "I am glad to be anchored safely to the green earth, with all the pleasant limitations of my small house."

"Yes, indeed," cried Tom fervently. "Don't you know how good I feel it to be here? And there are some small things that are far dearer to me to-night, and mean more than all that starry dome. For instance, this little——"

Barbara promptly withdrew her hand. "I must go home now," she said. "Positively I must."

"There goes another heart-string," said Tom resignedly.

"You never can trust those shop-worn articles," said Barbara, with a laugh of relief to find herself on the old safe ground. "It must be quite time to put on a tag: '19 cts., formerly worth $1.25.'"

Tom looked at her ruefully, but surely it was much wiser to keep on the border-land of jest and repartee. They had always been the best

of friends since they were school-children together. By all means they must hold on to their old delightful irresponsibility and carelessness. Sometimes, lately, Tom came so perilously near —what? She did not dare answer the question. She was half frightened at her own self, and the knowledge that the unconscious child-heart had gone from her. Why was it that, after the fun and frolic of years, an interview with Tom would now often leave her as restless and excitable as the sea after a storm, taking days to recover the old calm? She must clearly be on guard for them both. She must keep Tom from being silly. Indeed, she had no choice—it was her duty, since her father, for some strange reason that he would never explain, abhorred the very name of Page. Had he not forbidden her to have anything to do with any member of the family beyond the most necessary and commonplace interchanges of courtesy? And yet Tom was such a delightful fellow! Life would be distinctly blank without him.

"Miss Barbara," said Tom, after a long pause, in which he was mainly occupied in trying to keep up with her swiftly returning feet. "Have I been impertinent? Have I hurt you in any way?" He was very earnest this time. "Am I not your best friend!"

"Of course you are a friend," said Barbara

lightly. "I am trying to make up my mind how to classify you."

"The first of all," said Tom, in a shaking voice. "I have given you every proof but one, and that I withhold simply because you have taught me that it would be such folly to give it."

"Oh!" cried Barbara, laughing nervously, "do not let us grow stupid and serious. If we are to remain good friends, we must just go on laughing and joking at everything as we always have done. That is the only sensible way."

"You should have lived in the times of the Inquisition, Miss Barbara."

"Why?"

"You could so easily have invented new torments," said poor Tom, trying to meet her on her own ground, since, for the present, there was no other way. "But I am sorry to think of your remorse. I shall not long survive. Perhaps you may be touched with my devotion in my will. I shall leave you the most valuable of my possessions."

"And what may they be?" laughed Bab.

"My pistols, I think," said Tom tragically.

"The very thing!" cried Bab. "I have an enemy. I have been wanting to kill somebody for a week."

"May I do it for you, Miss Barbara?"

"If you like. It is a gentleman."

"Oh, do not ask me to commit suicide!" cried Tom.

Another burst of merriment cleared the air, but almost immediately Bab added hastily:

"Oh, do not come any further! We are just at the grounds, and papa——"

Tom wanted to say "Oh, bother papa!" and the effort at restraint imparted some stiffness to his brief formal, "Good-night, Miss Barbara!"

"Tom!" The brilliant little face leaned over the gate. By the faint light of the drawing-room windows, he could see the vivid rose red of her cheeks. "Tom, don't go like that. Say something pleasant before you go."

"My only difficulty, when with you, is in not saying all the pleasant things of which I think," said Tom mournfully.

"There, that will do," laughed Barbara.

A door suddenly opened behind her, throwing a broad shaft of light to the street. "Somebody is coming to look for me," she said nervously, and, throwing him a rosebud, she ran lightly up the path.

Tom heard a quick questioning in Mr. Fallon's metallic voice, softened strangely, nevertheless, as it always was to his little pet, Barbara. Added to this he was quite sure that he distinguished the thin high tenor of Mr. Wick-

ham Skinner, only son and heir of Clark Skinner, known familiarly as "Jim Skinner" in the old school days, but now insisting upon the more euphonious and high-toned family name of Wickham.

Tom's cheery face darkened. It was so strange, if all reports were true, that Mr. Fallon allowed this pushing, commonplace fellow such familiar footing in his house. It certainly could not be agreeable to Barbara, and it could only lead to cruel disillusion if the young man were so fatuous as to cherish any matrimonial ambitions. Mr. Fallon, as everybody knew, had built great expectations upon his beautiful daughter. She had been given all the advantages of foreign travel, and her education had received its finishing touches in Germany. She had already scored an immense success, the past winter, in the very innermost circles of Athens society. There seemed no social position she might not hope to touch. He could almost feel a good-natured pity for the poor moth flying about this brilliant candle.

But how about himself? The question urged itself upon him as he walked rapidly home through the dark, cool lanes. However sanguine his hopes and ambitions might be, he knew only too well that his future still lay unconquered before him. How would Mr. Fallon

regard him? Mr. Fallon, who had always treated himself and Schuyler with such insulting frigidity—a coldness which hitherto he had taken pride in repaying with interest. He had certainly wanted no social amenities from such a rascal, no matter what veneering his tolerant fellow-citizens had seen fit to put upon him. It might be unreasonable prejudice, perhaps, but he was also conscious of small affinity between himself and the son,—Hallett Fallon,—who had spent most of his life in a foreign land, and come home to look superciliously upon almost everything that an American holds most dear.

But Barbara! Ah, that was such a maddening complication! How he could ever have allowed himself to be drawn to anything by the name of "Fallon" he could not possibly explain. It had stolen upon him suddenly. He did not dream that the old schoolboy fancy could be playing him such a trick. But now, under all the light banter of the past hour, he had been conscious, as never before, of the strong current that was whirling him helpless as a twig in a spring freshet, and with him all reasonableness, prejudice, loyalty, were equally swept away—to what bourne he was not able to tell.

He flushed hotly as he thought of Schuyler. What difference might it make between them? Would those strong brotherly relations, dear to

him as life, be strained beyond their holding? Dear Sky! dear old fellow! should he give him such pain, or should he crush down the selfish desire which at the best must lead through much storm and stress to a bitterly uncertain end? And yet, was it possible to tear himself from the new world which had been opening before him, the new and wider horizon in whose light every ambition took more grand and inspiring shape? What would Schuyler's life be without Dorothy? Perhaps he would be merciful. Should he tell him? Should he spare him? These were heavy questions for the light-hearted Tom. Well, perhaps sometime—before long—not to-night. But fate had been ordering otherwise.

As Tom entered the library he found Schuyler sitting alone, a crumpled sheet of paper in his hand, a quizzical smile playing around his handsome mouth.

"Tom," he said, "you mustn't leave such things around carelessly, or we'll have to double our insurance. Between the flame and the sighs it is more dangerous than a bunch of matches in a March wind."

"Oh, did I leave that there?" stammered Tom, red to his hair. "I was just trying my author's hand at a little——"

"'A little song of love and death,'" finished Schuyler lightly, "I beg pardon for reading it,

It was left on the writing pad. I thought it was some notes of my own. I was half through before I recollected myself."

"No consequence whatever. Don't mention it," said Tom, in a muffled tone; but he had turned his back and was staring out of the window.

Schuyler rose quickly. "I have vexed you, Tom," he said, laying his hand on his arm, and starting as some indefinable tremor conveyed that, for some reason, Tom was unusually moved. "What is it, old fellow? I beg your pardon for a stupid joke; I might have known this was more than imagination. It stabs with the malice of reality, it has pointed words that kill. Come, Tom, tell me all about it. Who is she?"

Tom turned desperately. "No, it isn't a joke, Schuyler. Let us sit down," and he bravely faced the light, showing a face so strangely pale that Schuyler was immediately full of grave sympathy and attention.

"Tell me about it, Tom," he said gently. "The love of a good, pure woman is the most inspiring thing that can come into a man's life. The great thing is to make a wise choice. I could trust you, Tom, I am sure."

"She is sweet as a rose, and good and true," stammered Tom.

"It is a foregone conclusion," said Schuyler heartily, "and her name is——"

"I am not sure of her yet," cried Tom, shivering upon the brink. "There are frightful obstacles in the way. No one would say so quicker than you."

"You and I have slain dragons before, Tom. Surely we two brothers know each other well enough——"

"Yes, yes!" gulped Tom hastily.

"I shall go immediately and buckle on my armour," laughed Schuyler. "We will fight side by side. There can be no doubt as to results. And her name is——" he repeated, with his brilliant, compelling eyes on Tom.

"O Schuyler, you will never forgive it! You must remember how you loved Dot—how one has no power to control these things. Her name is—" he paused, then finished with a desperate rush—"her name is Barbara Fallon!"

Schuyler started violently, his face grew stern, the pleasant badinage all gone. "Can it be possible!" he cried, springing to his feet and pacing the room with long strides. Up and down, up and down! Poor Tom dropped his face in his hands. Would it never come to an end?

"Tom, this is inexpressibly painful to me," he said, at last. "Of course, you must know it.

God forgive me, but I am afraid I almost hate that man! The shadow goes back upon the dial when I think of him. The age of the cannibals —men ready to devour their brother—is not past. And to think that the honourable blood of the Pages—do you know what you are doing, Tom—all that it means? I am bitterly ashamed of myself," he continued, as Tom did not raise his head, "but my prejudices even descend to the next generation; certainly to young Hallett Fallon, a man of foreign habits and foreign principles."

A knock, twice repeated, was heard at the half-opened door.

"Mr. Wickham Skinner, sir," said the maid, raising her voice.

Schuyler turned irritably, at the unseasonable interruption, and advanced to meet the small dapper young man, whose bright inquisitive eyes were rapidly taking in every detail of the room, with a furtive glance at Tom's curly head dropped upon the table.

"Ah, Mr. Skinner's son, I believe?" he said coldly. "Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Father isn't a bit pleased with the new lights up at the mills; says the work has been scamped," said Mr. Wickham, with unnecessary impertinence. "He wanted me to tell you that the

office got on fire yesterday afternoon from a wire that hadn't been properly insulated."

Tom was sitting erect enough now. If that had only been Barbara's enemy, he thought, what a pleasure to have called him out! Their eyes were meeting, now, like crossed swords.

"Such a charge has never been brought against us before," said Schuyler quietly. "You should have sent me word at once. You knew where to find me."

"I did see Mr. Manning, but nothing has been done about it. Father thought it was your especial branch, and as I was passing to-night I thought I would call. No harm done, I hope," he added sulkily.

"I prefer to do business in business hours," said Schuyler, still with stiff courtesy. "But I am glad to know of it. It shall be remedied to-morrow. I shall give the matter my personal supervision. Good-night, Mr. Skinner!"

Scowling at his dismissal, and with one more all-embracing glance at the cosey room and all its pretty appointments, Mr. Wickham Skinner disappeared, and Schuyler resumed his restless walking to and fro.

"If you could only see her, Sky," said Tom, as the silence again became unendurable. "She isn't a bit like her father; she takes after her mother's side of the house. So pretty, too!

You know they say her mother was a great belle. And if you could talk with her, Schuyler, you would find her very noble, too. I think it would break her heart if she knew exactly what her father had done. She is so innocent and kind-hearted! I should only ask that you might know her, Sky; all the rest would come of itself. You are so just, so reasonable!"

"Give me time, Tom," said Schuyler, with an effort at a smile. "I think I am growing ashamed of myself."

"We are living in a reign of mercy," urged Tom; "the sins of the fathers shall not be visited upon the children."

"And you are sure that you love her?" said Schuyler, with painful earnestness. "There is no possible mistake? It is no boyish fancy—no chance of change?"

"I am not a grand fellow like you, Sky," said Tom humbly. "I remember when it was the height of my ambition to be, even physically, as tall as you, but you are always the two inches beyond me in body, soul, and spirit. And I cannot bear to go against you—I that have always sneezed when you have taken snuff—but, now, I am carried off my feet; I am helpless as in a maelstrom in which principle and loyalty have already gone down. Do I love her? I can no longer choose. I can no longer help loving her,

whether right or wrong. Why, Sky," he cried, in his old extravagant fashion, "I love her more than anything in the heaven above, or the earth beneath, or the waters under the earth; I love her as you love Dorothy."

Schuyler held out his strong right hand. There were great drops upon his forehead, but he drew out all Tom's heart with his slow, sweet smile.

"Then there shall never be another discordant word between us upon the subject," he said gently. "Call on me, if I can help you. I cannot promise impossible things, but I shall try not to fail you."

Tom nearly crushed his hand. "If you knew, Sky," he cried, "what a new world it makes to me—what a sweep of horizon!"

"Yes, my selfish passion shall raise no barrier between you and your wider world. Even this must not part you and me, Tom."

Tom struggled for a moment to speak, his heart swelling to bursting. There had been no ordinary affection between these two brothers.

"I knew you would be everything generous, Sky," he said at last. "I knew I could count on you, and you shall equally count upon me. There could be no new horizon where you were left out. If this is disloyalty to you, perhaps even now——"

Schuyler shook his head decidedly.

"Well, old fellow, dear old Sky, I shall never forget it. Time will show how I shall always stand by you, as I am sure you will always stand by me—even unto death! Can you say it, Schuyler?"

"Yes, Tom," he replied, with the same magnetic smile, "even unto death."

CHAPTER V.

A JUNE LAWN PARTY.

ALL Penfield's best society had been looking forward for weeks to the annual lawn party in Mr. Beals' extensive grounds. The evening had come, and was as near perfection as a June evening could be, beyond which imagination can scarcely farther go. The summer breeze had still a delicious freshness, and was as subtle and intoxicating with perfume as at the Feast of Roses in the far-famed vale of Cashmere.

Within the enchanted enclosure the trees and shrubs, like those in Aladdin's garden, were bearing great fruit-globes of amber and ruby and emerald. Over all poured a flood of silver sheen from the full moon riding high in the heavens.

Dorothy was coming down the stairs all in misty white, as mysterious and enchanting to Schuyler as the moonlight itself. He took her hand with all the old-time gallantry and kissed

it. Tom, hastening on his own errands, turned at the door.

> " 'A red-cross knight forever kneeled
> To a lady in his shield,' "

he flung back to them, laughing, and then went lightly on his way, singing in his sweet tenor voice:

> " 'Now sunlight dies, and over
> The valley reigns delight;
> And happy is the lover
> Who wanders here to-night.' "

"Ah, the pity of it!" said Schuyler, looking after him, many emotions on his mobile face, "The pity of it that youth and hope and love should not last forever! What is it, Dot," he turned to her wistfully, "that haunting thought that comes to us in our moments of greatest satisfaction? Does happiness itself cast a shadow? Does the high light in which we stand only accentuate the shadows of that unknown sea that is ever flowing about us? Is it the great separating enemy that I fear as I stand here, your hand in mine?

> " 'I wonder what day of the month?
> I wonder what month of the year?' "

"You have been working too steadily," said Dorothy quickly. "It is the natural reaction.

Forget it all. Live in the moment, and thank God for the joy of it."

"It is done," cried Schuyler brightly. "It was but the shadow of a bat-wing from that uncanny territory of the unknown. See here, Dorothy! see what I have brought you."

He opened a jewel case disclosing a *rivière* of diamonds, flashing like a line of fire in the dim half light of the hall.

"I have had my share of the old Page diamonds reset for you, and it has brought out all their beauty," he said. "Let me clasp them around your neck."

Dorothy gave a little womanly cry of admiration:

"How beautiful!"

"Yes, crystallised perfectly, according to their obedience to their lovely law of life," said Schuyler.

"How good of you!" she cried again. "How like you! If anybody was ever thoroughly pampered and spoiled, it is I. Oh, they are much too fine for me."

"Nothing is half fine enough for you, 'little brother,'" he cried.

Dorothy's eyes were full of tears. "You dear, extravagant thing!" she said, her white arms around his neck. "But you do not mean me to wear them to-night?"

"Ah, why not?" he cried, greatly disappointed. "There are only nine of them, and not so very large."

"But dear old Sky, they are not quite fitted to my gown or the occasion."

"Entirely in keeping!" persisted Schuyler. "You would only look like embodied moonlight, with a little procession of fire-flies trailing across it."

"To be sure," laughed Dorothy. "Some day when I am Governor's lady at Athens, I shall wear them and fill out the picture. But not to-night," she pleaded. "It would be in better taste—you must trust me, Sky. Come, it is getting late; shall we go back to the library, and put the fire-flies in the safe?"

"If we must," cried Schuyler ruefully. "'Il ne faut pas toucher à la reine.'"

"It is all right, Sky," she said as, a few minutes after, they went down the steps like two children, hand in hand. "You think the diamonds are in the safe, but they are really in my heart. You will see them flashing out all the evening."

"Yes, dear, pretty Dorothy," he said magnanimously. "Perhaps I was trying to paint the lily; perhaps you are even more lovely without the tinsel string."

Just at the gate young Pete bolted into them like a bomb from a mortar.

"Didn't go for to do it!" he gasped, blown with much running. "Stopped two seconds to see the show—'fraid I was too late—here's a bokay Mr. Hallett's sent to Mis' Page with——"

"Take them straight back to Mr. Hallett," interrupted Schuyler, flushing, "and tell him Mrs. Page is fully provided with flowers."

"O Schuyler!" said Dorothy, aside, "that is very discourteous. He probably meant a simple neighbourly politeness. Shall we not thank him, and if rebuke is needed, it will be enough that I do not carry the flowers?"

"As you will," said Schuyler briefly, and Pete was despatched with cold but suitable messages.

"They are very beautiful," said Dorothy, drawing them from their soft white wrappers.

Schuyler took them with a swift motion, and hurled them far away into the shrubbery.

The ubiquitous Toni, who had lingered to jump in short joyful leaps about Schuyler's hand, took this as a personal attention. With a yelp of delight he tore into the bushes, and presently returned with the trophy, dropping it in the dust of the road, and pawing it with his clumsy feet. A sharp whistle from the rapidly receding Pete recalled him to his more prosaic

duties, and panting and reluctant, he trotted away with many a backward glance.

"Alas, poor innocent flowers!" laughed Dorothy.

"It would have been well for those flowers if they had never been born!" said Schuyler shortly, with the old quick-tempered stride she remembered so well.

Cousin Delia, leaning on her gate, hailed them as they were passing by.

"Goin' to the party, I 'spose? Mis' Beals told me she guessed I'd enjoy it more to have a quiet little tea by myself to-morrow or next day. It's more of a compliment, too, when you think of it," she said anxiously. "You ain't lumped right in with the herd."

"Oh, certainly," said Dorothy soothingly.

"But Mis' Skinner'll be there," she said grudgingly. "She's beginnin' to git into society. She's worked hard enough. They've come out grand lately—new kerridge and horses, and I hear they're goin' to build right next to Mr. Beals. Great doin's for a man on a salary. He'll beat Fallon himself if he keeps on."

"Come, Dorothy," urged Schuyler, already several paces away.

"Jest one minute," said Cousin Delia. "I want to give you a piece of advice. I don't say Mis' Skinner hadn't ought to be there. Mebbe

she's earned it. There's no more tryin' job, accordin' to my thinkin', then allus playin' so sweet and soft. But you'd better look out for a person that's spendin' all their life tryin' to butter parsnips. I don't know what it may be wuth in Bible lands, but, when it comes to people, you'd better suspicion any person that's allus flowin' with milk and honey. That's my rule."

"Thanks for the point, Cousin Delia," laughed Dorothy, running to rejoin Schuyler.

He took her hand with the quick remorse whose every phase she also knew so well.

"If I do not insulate myself with a little better self control," he said ruefully, "I shall be as dangerous to have around as a 'live wire.'"

"You are much better covered than you used to be," she said, with a sweet earnestness. "There is hardly ever a flash."

"I see you have remembered to bring your rose-coloured spectacles," he said gratefully, "and your box of sugar pills."

"I never dare go into society without them," she laughed. "Then I am thoroughly equipped, ready for a tilt with anybody from Cousin Delia up to the 'Brother of the Sun and Moon.'"

The invitations of the Beals had been very general, and when they arrived at the grounds,

with the claims of one friend and another, they soon drifted quite far apart in the growing crowd.

Schuyler fell in with a little group consisting of his partner, Mr. Manning, Mr. Beals, Dr. Peters, and one or two others. They were discussing a subject somewhat out of harmony with the gay surroundings—the increasingly dark prospects of the country and the dissatisfaction of the workingman in every department of labor.

"A very unreasonable, sullen set of men we have to contend with since that last cut in their wages," said Mr. Beals, with a clouded face. "I hear that they are on the point of a strike. If they would only wait a few weeks till we fill our present contracts, nothing in the world would please us better. With no new orders coming in, it is positive madness crowding goods upon a market already heavily overstocked."

"It would create a wide-spread distress to throw so many men out of employment," said Dr. Peters.

"Let them learn a lesson!" cried Mr. Beals; "I am tired of their sulky looks. You seem to have secured a better class of men at your works, Mr. Manning—intelligent, cheerful. I have noticed them. You have been singularly fortunate. I believe you have never had a strike."

"We have been trying some of the new nineteenth-century methods," said Mr. Manning, with a nod and smile at Schuyler. "It is an experiment, but, so far, has been reasonably successful. Outside of the regular wages, we allow all our men some percentage of our profits, graduated, of course, according to their ability; and since that plan has been in operation I can testify that we have had far more faithful service than ever before, with a cheerful acceptance of the demands of the situation, whatever that might be."

"How about your individual profit?" asked Mr. Beals.

"I am not sure but that also is helped by the quality of the work, which, as is well known, must improve in proportion to the encouragement it receives. If you want a thing well done you must expect to pay for it. But even if this individual gain should be a trifle less, which has not yet proved to be the case, we would be more than compensated by our peace of mind, freedom from worry, and the general good feeling and comradeship."

"We must give time for that experiment," said Mr. Beals. "I am not sure that it will solve all problems. How if there are no profits at all?"

"We have still the duty of charity," said

Schuyler, "and surely the best form of administering that charity is to keep the men on some kind of wages as long as possible. Try to tide them over, preserve the man that is in them, and hope for better times."

"Rather Utopian. Not always practical or possible, eh, Beals?" said Mr. Fletcher, the keen-eyed, satirical lawyer in whose office Tom was studying.

"I believe with Herbert Spencer," said Mr. Beals warmly, "'that it is wrong to take from the worthy the things they have laboured for in order to give to the unworthy the things they have not earned.'"

"We all agree with you," cried Dr. Peters. "That is his definition of socialism as it is commonly understood, quite different from this feeling of brotherhood which makes the whole air electric with the real spirit of Christianity."

"Yes, doctor," smiled Mr Fletcher; "a little of the sublime unselfishness of your Founder, which the churches generally keep for private admiration and expounding, seems to have dripped through, by accident, into real, practical life."

"Nobody would be quicker than Dr. Peters to admit the value of practice as compared with theory," said Schuyler, hastening to atone for any possible disrespect. "We may differ as to

modes of action, but we are in great sympathy in these matters."

"'Diversities of gifts, but the same spirit,'" laughed Mr. Fletcher.

"Would it were so," said the old man wistfully.

"And why not, doctor?" said Schuyler smiling. "I admit my limitations, my mind does not fall easily into ecclesiastical formulæ. When I became a man I was forced to put away some cherished things; I cannot play with theological kites and balls, but I am sure I am not lacking in reverence for that great Life which has always been the surprise of the world. I saw a clever skit in the newspapers, lately, which pleased me. Some modern poet has put into words an attitude that is, perhaps, possible to us all:

"'If Jesus Christ is a man—
And only a man—I say
That of all mankind I cleave to him,
And to him will I cleave alway.

But if Jesus Christ is a God—
And the only God—I swear
I will follow him through heaven and hell,
And earth and sea and air.'"

"There ought not to be any 'if' about it, Schuyler," said Dr. Peters, with pardonable heat.

"What matters it as long as one follows him?" said Schuyler. "Surely a belief *in* the great God-man must be a more powerful leaven in life than any amount of belief *about* him. That seems to me the real thing."

"I am not learned in the weightier matters of the law," added Mr. Fletcher, "but it appeals to me, also, that if a new life-force has come into the world, as I believe the churches teach, it would be an anomaly if it were not as universal as other heavenly gifts—as free as air, for instance, as physical breath. For any one body of men to claim a monopoly for its small channels seems to me as absurd and egotistic as if some school of science should ordain that there should be no invention or discovery outside its dicta and control."

"In short," said Schuyler, "wherever lungs are ready, there the breath must blow in, whether the new-born baby knows the difference between oxygen and nitrogen, natural and supernatural, or not."

"Ah, where the lungs are ready!" cried Dr. Peters.

"You believe that we are all heirs together, I see," said Lawyer Fletcher, his keen eyes studying Schuyler's face good-naturedly. "You believe that we are all in one and the same stream of being?"

"Undoubtedly, and it is a soundly practical idea when you come to think of it. If we truly believed in the solidarity of the race, nothing could prevent an immediate improvement in the conditions of men. Suppose you were as vitally sure as that two and two make four, that we were all—to use an old figure—members of one body; you perhaps, my hands, I your feet. You would see, of course that the hands had power to injure the feet, but, in so doing, would most surely cripple themselves. It will be a most hopeful advance," he laughed, "when man fully recognises this fact; when he is dead sure that the law that action and reaction are equal holds good in every department of life, and that every injury or injustice to our fellow-man swings back, in like manner, to its source."

"The law of the moral boomerang!" cried Mr. Fletcher.

"Precisely," said Schuyler brightly. "You must see the tremendous gain in intelligent action, if men could only be convinced of it."

"I am glad that you admit that we are not all quite on a level, however," said Mr. Beals. "You allow a head to your great body, I believe."

"Most assuredly," said Schuyler, "and that is a most illuminating fact for all socialists and nihilists. There can be no greater idiocy than

to refuse to recognise the great value of the head! The hands are prone to flatter themselves that they are everything—and they have undoubted power. The fingers may pull the trigger that sends a bullet through the head."

Schuyler hesitated; Mr. Skinner was passing by with a searching look of distinct unfriendliness.

"I do not know how I have wronged that man," he said, in a swift aside to Dr. Peters.

"Some men regard the lives of those who differ from them as the most insulting personal criticism," remarked Dr. Peters.

Schuyler waved his hand. "As I was saying," he continued, "the fingers may pull the trigger, but alas, alas, for the fingers! Every time the fingers try to injure the head, it is slow suicide."

"That is good sense," said Mr. Fletcher. "It is not the fashion to do justice to heads in this present crazy age, but it is owing to the splendid achievement, the invention of the head, 'the scarce brains,' that, as somebody has well said, it is easier for a tramp to get a living in this world, to-day, than it was a hundred years ago for an honest man."

"And I hope you believe that they should have some supremacy in the fortune that they have so legitimately earned," said Mr. Beals sharply.

"You do not believe in the crude idea of an equal distribution to all men?"

"Far from it," said Schuyler earnestly. "It would be the gravest mistake. It would be a paralysing thing to take away from men the great incentives of competition and success. It is just that there should be some unusual return for a life of unusual enterprise and industry. At the same time," he added, "the head should see, with wise selfishness, that the hands and feet are not defrauded, or crushed in any way. In that case, alas, for the head!"

"I have heard people talk of the solidarity of the race," said Mr. Fletcher, "but you are the first consistent believer I ever met."

"I go farther," Schuyler responded; "I am not sure but I believe in the solidarity of the universe. There is no hard and fast line between spirit and matter—the roads are all open and thronged."

Kitty Beals, home on a short vacation, was coming toward them with a tray of ices, her fresh, wholesome face almost beautiful with its long uplifting in the service of others.

"What do you think, Miss Kitty?" cried Mr. Fletcher mischievously. "Here is Mr. Page making the most alarming suggestions. I think he expects the angels down upon us in a 'college settlement' almost any time. I verily

believe he thinks those 'high-born kinsmen' would be happier on the golden streets for having all the earth slums in better order."

"I am not sure but he is right. There is an idea in it," laughed the girl, as she went her way.

"There is so much that needs straightening in this crooked little world," said Mr. Fletcher. "Setting aside the depravity of man, I should be very grateful and find the world quite a comfortable place to live in, if something could only be done for what I think should be called the original sin of nature. Now, what do you think of the pure malice of those Western cyclones we had last week?"

Dr. Peters looked troubled, and Mr. Beals said gravely:

"I should hardly express myself in that way. It is a great mystery, but I suppose we must accept them as the will of God."

"Not at all!" cried Schuyler explosively. "The atmosphere about the earth is certainly part of matter, and belongs to this world in which we are still praying that the will of God may be done as it is in heaven. Isn't that so, Dr. Peters? I do not believe that God's will is done in such matters any more than it is in the heart of a thief or a murderer."

"Could you give us any hope as to whether it

ever would be done?" said Mr. Fletcher lightly. "I am interested in all the vagaries of human minds."

Schuyler laughed, flushing slightly. "Yes, I can confidently say that Friday's great question: 'Why doesn't God kill the devil?' is beginning to find an intelligent answer in these days. He is killing him in this earth just as fast as man will allow him to do it. You must see that if the 'Infinite and Eternal Energy' is ever to cast evil out of matter, it must enter at the apex of matter—the half-open door of man's brain. As soon as man recognises this, and ceases to clamour for—so-called—supernatural intervention, he will co-operate more gladly and intelligently, and the world will improve with corresponding rapidity.

"That wise friend of mine—the 'Captain,' you know," he added, turning to Dr. Peters, "used to say that in the Humanity called the 'God-man,' we saw the beginning of the final triumph of spirit over matter. Victory, at that time, was first brought into the world. We must wait, he insisted, until this new power had fulfilled its promise of putting all things under its feet, before we could confidently say what was the will of God in nature. He used to be very hopeful as he saw the great quickening of invention in these latter days."

"But invention certainly has not been limited to the Christian civilisation," urged Mr. Fletcher. "There were fertile brains and great achievements long before that era, grand though it be."

"But nothing to be compared to the startling discoveries which have made this present age a perfect fairyland of science. And has it never struck you as strange that the greatest developments in this line have been in those countries that have accepted what you call the Christian civilisation?"

"Perhaps," said Mr. Fletcher doubtfully, "but I don't see any reason why it should be so."

"One reason might be," Schuyler responded, "because it is never safe to let knowledge get ahead of character. 'Power exalts none but the exalted.' Whether power is desirable, even, depends upon the one who is to use it. You can see the danger in dynamite, which has evidently been discovered a little ahead of its time," he laughed. "The knowledge has come before there is enough kingdom of heaven upon earth to control it."

"Very ingenious," cried Mr. Fletcher. "With this illustration write me down a convert. I fervently hope that all future discoveries of this nature may be coincident with character."

"Thanks," returned Schuyler. "And to revert to those cyclones, I believe that the great Oversoul is quite willing that we should make our conditions more safe—more than willing. We electricians are going to take hold of those cyclones before long. There is a well-known district where they gather their forces. They are the outcome of a wild, unbalanced, what you might call, freshman electricity, full of clumsy and dangerous jokes. Now, if some ingenious, cleverly laid battery-traps could be devised to invite their confidence, we might lasso them, and strangle the cyclone in the country of its birth. Mr. Manning and I are at work on the problem at this very hour."

"Speak for yourself, Mr. Page," laughed Mr. Manning. "I leave you all the honour."

Good Dr. Peters pondered. "It would not be out of the line of prophecy, Schuyler," he said. "Perhaps we ought to expect it. It would be a grand thing, even in one direction, to have the Prince of the Power of the Air barred out by a strong son of God."

"Good!" cried Mr. Fletcher. "Now, that is something practical. It would be one of the most popular achievements of the Church, I assure you—a scientific miracle that would appeal to all men."

"But why must we find ourselves in such

sorry conditions?" said Mr. Manning. "This universal evil remains the most unfathomable mystery."

"I sometimes think," said Schuyler thoughtfully, "that there is some kind of a clue in man, who seems to me a microcosm in which the whole idea of the universe is repeated. If, as has been said, 'spirit is the highest form of matter, and matter is the lowest form of spirit,' why is not matter, in a certain sense, spirit's lower self, not yet brought into perfect subjection and control?"

Dr. Peters held up hands of unqualified dissent. "That borders closely on irreverence, Schuyler," he said gravely.

"I beg your pardon," said Schuyler quickly, as they drew somewhat apart. "It all grew out of that idea of solidarity which has taken such possession of me. I like to think of that great Power entering into everything, way out to the outermost hair of matter. I seem to feel the push of it. I like to think that our best thought is a direct emanation from the great Brain; that we must have something in us that, in the beginning, was with God, and, in some small measure, was God."

Before Dr. Peters could give voice to his shocked disapproval of the form of this state-

ment, Schuyler's bright face suddenly clouded, and with a brief "I beg your pardon, doctor," he had shot from him like an arrow.

Something was calling him more loudly than words. He had caught a flushed, annoyed glance, turning this way and that, in ever disappointed quest. There had been a glimpse of a fluttering white gown drawn back reluctantly from a dim alley of trees, a gallant hand pushing back the dewy shrubbery, a graceful, well-groomed figure bending with an eager devotion in sharp contrast with its usual air of boredom and ennui. Schuyler's heart was again growing hot within him.

Mr. Fallon, senior, arm in arm with clerk Skinner, drew near to Dr. Peters, who was still gazing after Schuyler, a mixture of love and pain upon his kindly face. Mr. Fallon followed the direction sneeringly.

"An unpractical, visionary dreamer!" he said curtly.

Whatever were Dr. Peter's limitations, loyalty was not one of them.

"We may make mistakes, Mr. Fallon. There have been dreamers, you remember, who have ascended thrones and built granaries for the famine of a world."

"Not such as he, Dr. Peters. A man of unbridled temper, with 'conceit on a hair trigger.'

One would be hard put to it to risk *his* chances for a future."

"What is the matter with Fallon?" said Mr. Manning, as the great man passed on without trying to join the group. "He was not in his usual tropical zone of suavity. In fact I should think he was about two below zero. I positively felt a cold wind from him."

"He has had some unpleasant interview—somebody, perhaps, has left a window open on his conscience," said Mr. Fletcher, with a laugh at his own wit. "That gives the worst kind of chill."

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Beals, with a very red face, "I consider your remarks in very poor taste."

"So they are," cried Dr. Peters warmly. "Come, let us all go and take a friendly cup of coffee."

"With all my heart," said Mr. Fletcher. "There goes young Pete this minute with a tray, with that invaluable all-around smile that ought to put one in good humour with the whole world."

CHAPTER VI.

A FORCED MOVE.

MR. FALLON, meanwhile, with his secretary of state, had disappeared down a secluded path, the frown on his face deepening as he passed from the revealing light of the gay lanterns. The subject evidently was far from pleasant. Mr. Skinner had been dilating, as often before in the past few weeks, upon the increasing embarrassments of the Banner Mills. There had been great disappointment in expected returns; there were large notes to meet in the immediate future; some method must speedily be devised for relieving the situation.

"But I am sure Hallett told me there had been several large cheques received this last month," said Mr. Fallon testily. "Your bank deposit ought to meet any ordinary emergency. If the money is not there, where has it gone, sir?"

"The books are open to you, Mr. Fallon,"

said Skinner resentfully. "You will see that our expenses have been frightful."

"You must lessen them. Dismiss half the men. Curtail in every direction."

"Too radical measures might impair our credit," suggested Mr. Skinner. "I was going to propose to you that we issue more stock. Offer it first at par as a great prize to the present holders, and afterward to the general public. There will be no difficulty in disposing of shares, that so far have had the reputation of being an investment yielding the most brilliant returns in the country. Beals would take more, I am sure, and Fletcher could be approached. Perhaps we need not waste any time with Manning."

Mr. Fallon scowled. "No," he said curtly. "He has cast in his lot with that wind-bag! But I will talk this over with my son; there surely can be no such great hurry. And everything must be strictly honourable. There are lynx eyes all about us. I insist that everything shall be honourable, Skinner," he said querulously.

Skinner looked up with a smile for which Mr. Fallon would gladly have knocked him down; but, alas, that time had gone by! There had been many dangerous secrets in Mr. Fallon's long career, and too well he knew that the astute Skinner held the key to them all.

"Of course everything will be honourable," he was saying, "but nobody could expect us to set up the office books on the corner of the street."

"Our secrets are our own," agreed Mr. Fallon. "But let us make haste slowly; I insist that everything must now be done in the line of legitimate business." His late popularity had been very sweet; he had no mind to risk this sunshine for the averted looks of ten years ago.

Mr. Skinner's smile was more pronounced than before; in fact there was a scarcely repressed chuckle. Mr. Fallon heard with a grinding of the teeth. Great Heavens, if he only dare to resent it!

"To take up a more pleasant subject," said Mr. Skinner. "I hope you have thought favourably of that matter I broached a week ago. "My son," he said, with an attempt at facetiousness still more galling to Mr. Fallon, "is sorely afflicted with that 'dizziness that will not let an honest body gang about his bizziness.' Like all impatient young lovers, he is in tortures until he has some assurance that you approve of his suit."

His worst enemy might have pitied Mr. Fallon. What! his pretty little Barbara, of whom the best in the land was not worthy, to be

given in marriage to the upstart son of his old clerk Skinner! And yet, for the moment, no man ever stood more helpless in the secret chamber of the Inquisition than did he before this small, crafty man, his own most apt and promising pupil.

He rapidly reviewed some dangerous facts as he stood wiping the perspiration from his forehead. There had been large fortunes entrusted to his care—the fortunes of women and children, which he had unscrupulously used in his wide ventures and speculations. Hitherto he had been able to pay the interest on these funds that no longer existed; promptly and smilingly he had paid it upon the day and hour that it was due. But what if a day of reckoning should be forced upon him, before his many ships at sea could make their port if—indeed, they ever survived the breakers of the present financial storm?

And Skinner, who had obsequiously studied him for years, with almost unsleeping eye, had lately become insolent. Skinner had wormed himself into his secrets. Skinner held the proofs, and was flaunting his power. Skinner was letting him know that he, Fallon, stood over the crater of a volcano.

But if Skinner could be held in leash just a little while longer, it might be possible to creep

back to safety. Those trust funds, with which he had maintained his reputation for fabulous wealth, might slowly be replaced. He should be glad to do it; he was tired of living in such a hell of uncertainty and alarm. But, in the meantime, the sop must be given.

"I never said I had any objection to your son, Mr. Skinner," he said, with dry lips. "If he can win my daughter's affections, I shall not stand in the way of her happiness."

"We hoped for more than this negative attitude; we hoped and confidently expected that you would throw your influence in favour of the suit."

Skinner's voice held a distinct threat in it. Mr. Fallon felt upon his shoulders the lash of the taskmaster.

"We hoped that you would distinctly recommend the good points of my son which you know so well. A little fatherly authority, if necessary, might greatly hasten the happiness of two very worthy young people."

The two men had again emerged into the lighted square. There was a burst of gay music; the young people were dancing merrily. Mr. Fallon gazed about him in a dazed way, like one walking in a painful dream. He saw his piquante little Barbara tripping very gravely through the Lancers, giving only the tips of her fingers to her

smart young partner, Wickham Skinner, in his faultless brand-new suit, with the exaggerated rose in his buttonhole. It seemed to him that she looked wistfully at him, as her draperies floated by. She was plainly not enjoying herself.

"I may say, also," said Mr. Skinner, fixing his sharp, insistent eyes upon him, "that Wickham is a boy of whom any father might be proud. He has my entire confidence, and shares my secrets." Mr. Fallon started involuntarily. "He is only slightly hot-tempered. Perhaps in case of any insult, he might not always show the discretion of an older person in resenting it."

"He has had nothing to complain of, I believe," said Mr. Fallon coldly. "I have already told my daughter that I wished her to receive him with every consideration. Yes, my dear," he added to a pretty, pale woman who came anxiously to his side. "I am not feeling at all well. I have a blinding headache. Whenever you would like to go home, I am ready."

"Immediately," she said, with her sweet, faded smile. "But poor Bab! the pleasure of the young people is just beginning."

"Perhaps Mrs. Fletcher will chaperon her a little while," began Mr. Fallon.

"Allow me," cried Mr. Skinner, and he drew hastily forward, at the opportune moment, a

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flutter of ribbons, and laces, and bangles, and jewelled hairpins.

"She is a regular country store," whispered Tom, on the dark outer fringe of the circle, to the conscious Barbara. "If you don't see what you want, ask for it; it is all there."

"Mrs. Skinner," her husband was saying, "will be delighted to take charge of her, and see her safe home."

There was nothing more to be done, and, with conventional thanks, the Fallons abruptly went their way.

As the first dance was finished, Bab felt her hand snatched with swift strategic movement, and she was hurried through friendly gloom to the shelter of a small honeysuckle arbour, with just seats enough for two.

"How can you treat me so!" panted Tom. "Didn't you see that I was melancholy as a gib-cat?

> "'Joie est mon caractère,
> C'est la faute à Voltaire,
> Mais misère est mon trousseau,
> C'est la faute à Rousseau.'

"Or, rather, the fault is entirely to Wickham Skinner. He is the frightful thorn upon which I have been hanging impaled all the evening while trying to climb up to my rose. If it had only been Charley Beals, I could have forgiven

it. I used to be horribly jealous of him in the old schooldays, you remember ; but it never was a humiliation. He was always such an honourable all-around good fellow, Bab. Do you know what a great record he is getting over in those German hospitals ? I am half afraid to have him come home in the fall. But that you could ever smile on such a tailor's dummy as this ! Oh, foolish Galatian, what hath bewitched you ?"

" Don't, Tom ! If you knew how frightfully I have been bored ! " sighed Barbara.

"It is your own fault," cried Tom frankly. "Why did you let him take such a mortal bite out of the evening ? You know, Bab, it can't survive but the shortest time."

" Honestly, I could not help it," panted Barbara. " Papa told me he wished me to be very polite—extremely polite to Mr. Skinner. He especially wished it, and did not want any failure."

Tom gave a long whistle. " Well, I'm sure I don't see why."

" Nor I," said Barbara frankly. "It has been such a bore ! "

" Tell me all about it, little rufus-breasted humming bird," said Tom, looking admiringly at the light lawn dress, with its cascade of crimson ribbons from pretty throat to waist.

" Be sensible, then," said Barbara, blushing.

"Certainly," said Tom, "I was only trying to tell you that you looked passably well in that gown. There, I guess that is the first time you ever had a compliment on your looks! Will that do?"

"Better!" laughed Barbara. "Ah, it is so pleasant to be free! He met me the very first thing, and quite insisted on my going into that room off the piazza, where all the old dowagers are playing games. He didn't care to dance—you wouldn't wonder if you noticed him. But think of turning one's back on all fairyland outside, and sitting down to two mortal games of backgammon! He beat me every time—I forgot my men."

"Unhappy men, to be forgotten by you!" murmured Tom.

"Really you are hopeless!" cried Barbara, rising nervously. "I must go; they will be looking for me."

"When I have only just found you!" cried Tom reproachfully. "Oh, no, not yet, Miss Barbara Tantalus Fallon," he laughed, standing in the entrance and barring the way.

"But I want to tell you something," began Barbara, with quickened breath. "Yes, I ought to tell you."

"I have a presentiment that it is a mortal thrust," cried Tom tragically. "It will amuse

you, of course. You only see the flashing of your spear ; your victims have to look upon the wounds."

"I am sure I have wounds to look upon, too," said Barbara.

"No," cried Tom quickly, "I conceal them all."

"You are so delightfully absurd, Tom," cried Barbara, with irrepressible laughter. "There, did anybody hear ? Do let us try to be sensible," she again looked anxiously about her. "We can have such a few minutes together."

"And why ?" cried Tom. "It is not at all late."

Barbara paid no heed to the question. "Tell me, Tom," she burst out explosively, "why does papa dislike you and your brother so very much ?"

"How should I know ?" said Tom evasively, feeling that he was growing so very red that rocks and shrubs must inevitably glare back in an enlightening reflection , but we owe much to the ever calm self-possession of nature. "Men take unreasonable prejudices sometimes," he stammered.

"It is no light matter," said Barbara earnestly. "In almost everything I can wind papa about my finger, but if I dare to mention your name he grows hard as iron. Oh, I ought not

to tell you, and yet I could not bear that you should not understand, for—for I am sure Tom—Mr. Page—you must see that it is better I should try not to meet you so often in the future."

"Nothing of the kind!" said Tom stoutly. "To think of your giving me up so calmly! As for me, nothing could equal my despair but my hope and determination. Always 'je souffre, mais je souffre gaiement.'"

"You don't know how papa feels!" began Barbara tremulously.

"And you don't know how I feel!" cried Tom, his voice softening from the usual tone of gay badinage, with the touch of a deep emotion.

A strain of the distant music from the band drifted wistfully by; the silver light filtered in a bewildering way through the delicate lace work of the leaves. Oh, the scent of the roses! Oh, the full moon! Oh, the sweet, subtle, haunting loveliness of it all!

"I may as well say it now," said Tom, in a choked voice. "Why not? I love you, Barbara! The whole world may know it if need be. It cannot be any news to you. Under all the gay jesting I am sure you have heard the beating of my heart. I am not such a conceited idiot as to think you love me. I only want to ask you a question. What can I do to make you like me more? Tell me—tell me, Barbara!"

Barbara made an effort to pass him. "I must find Mrs. Beals," she said, in a frightened way. "It is late, everybody must be going home."

"Oh, not yet!" pleaded Tom. "You must forgive me first, I have been intoxicated—I acknowledge it. But how could I help it when the night has been talking only of you, and the enchanted music has cried Barbara! Barbara! till I wondered everybody didn't remark it. Why is it that everything beautiful has always been associated with you since first I knew you? Speak, Barbara. Return me one gold coin for my string of Japanese amalgam. You are really determined to go! Well," cried the poor fellow, returning to the air of jest with which he always tried to cover the depth of his feeling, "you cannot get out of this corner without walking over my heart."

To his great surprise Barbara burst into tears.

"You will not understand!" she said in response to his overwhelming penitence. "I tried to tell you that I must not listen to you. Papa has forbidden me to think of you even as an ordinary friend. We had a long talk last night. You must not try to change me. Papa has done everything for me all my life; he has gratified my lightest wish. It is very little I have ever been able to do for him," she faltered. "I should like to please him, I did not think it

would be so hard; but, now, every minute here is a disloyalty."

"You do care for me just a little, then?" cried Tom, eagerly, advancing a step.

Barbara put up her hand. "I have not told you all. Mr. Wickham Skinner has been speaking to papa about me."

"Himmel!" exploded Tom.

"And papa says it would gratify him very much, and be in accordance with his dearest wishes for my happiness, if I could look upon such an excellent young man as——"

"Miss Barbara! Miss Fallon! where can you have been so long?" cried Mrs. Skinner's high, thin voice, perilously near.

"This way, Bab," whispered Tom, seizing her hand and dragging her breathlessly through a dark side-path on the outskirts, and bringing her into the charmed circle of light on quite the opposite side of the grounds.

"But you could not do it, Barbara; say you could not!" said Tom passionately, just before they emerged.

"No, I could not." And then she added hastily: "But perhaps I *must*. Papa knows best." She had a frightened little air, all her pretty colour gone.

Tom fairly ground his teeth. He pressed her hand reassuringly, however. "It won't be to-

morrow," he said. "There are a hundred ways, as the lawyers say, of adjourning a case and laying a thing on the table. You did right to tell me. Trust me, it shall never be! Oh, here come Dorothy and Schuyler. What luck! I am so anxious that you should know each other better."

"How beautiful she is!" said Barbara wistfully, "and so gracefully tall and slender. Hallett says such little women as I are extinguished by the side of her. He says she is no provincial belle, but has one of those rare types of loveliness that give her a place among the few beautiful women of the world. One could easily agree with him to-night."

Tom shrugged his shoulders. For some reason he did not care for this testimony. A vague forecast of possible, nay probable, collisions with this pleasure-loving brother in the future, cast a decided shadow over the rosy present. Surely no course of true love had ever encountered more irritating snags than his. But who can struggle against his fate? Barbara's bright, innocent face, upturned to his, was swaying him as the moon plays with the tides.

"Yes, indeed," he assented, warmly enough. "And that is not the best of it. They are as happy together as two schoolboys on a holiday. They live in Arcadia."

"I should like to know them better," said Barbara.

"You must, although I shall suffer by contrast," laughed Tom. "There is Schuyler—he never spends his time in aimless little running to and fro like me. Everything he does is important. There is a kind of planetary swing to him. You can't help watching him. Isn't it odd that in every community there will always be one person whom everybody else is watching?"

He had time for no more. "Ah, Schuyler! Dorothy! Don't you remember?" he cried, as they came within speaking distance. "This is little Barbara Fallon!"

He paused, watching with eagerness growing into delight the impression made by the dear dimpled face, brilliant enough now with a rush of returning colour.

Schuyler was more than favourably impressed, he was sure of it. That was happiness enough for one evening. If such moments could only be prolonged! But the indefatigable Mrs. Skinner had discovered them again, and she had her discomfited son in tow. It was late, she said, with decided acidity in her tone. She had promised Mrs. Fallon that her daughter should return early. She had been looking everywhere for the last hour. She was sorry to interrupt anything so delightful, but if they would kindly

pardon her, she really must insist—and so forth, and so forth.

Yes, the lights were going out ; a chill breeze seemed to have arisen from some unfriendly clime ; the servants were clearing the tables; the pretty fluttering robes were drifting from the gates ; and poor little Barbara started and turned with a shiver almost as if the end of the world had come.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RISING TIDE.

It was an evening in early September, and Dorothy had gone to the Children's Park, as was often her custom, to meet Schuyler on his way home. He had been very busy there lately. He was building a large addition to the little cottage—a great room which he meant to fit up for a gymnasium, and for all delightful games. It should be well warmed and lighted, and the meagre lives of the mill-children should still, through the biting winter, find some small door open into Paradise.

The joyous shouts, as she drew near, conveyed to her the fact that he was already there. She paused, leaning over the gate, her heart swelling with pride as she followed him towering in the midst of his adoring subjects, who so swarmed about him that he was helpless as the man-mountain taken by the Liliputians.

Would he play one game of ball? Would

he come to see the storming of Fort Sumter? Would he look at the prize set of braided mats set apart especially for him?

But Schuyler finally disentangled himself and worked his way toward Lame Joe, who stood patiently waiting with a little carriage drawn to one side.

"I took him out to get a little of the cool of the evenin'," he said. "Almiry was so beat out, and the house was so hot with the washin' and ironin', and now the little fellow won't go home till he's spoke to Mr. Schuyler—he'd be blamed if he would!" said Joe, with mingled disapprobation and affection.

The child's great grave eyes were fixed upon Schuyler, a faint smile curling his lips, while his little hands beat an eager welcome upon his breast. They had grown very great friends during the summer.

"Poor baby!" said Schuyler, with infinite tenderness, taking him in his arms. The child laid his little head contentedly against the broad breast, but he never removed his great wonderful eyes from the kind face.

"They are not baby eyes, are they, Joe?" Schuyler smiled. "They are the eyes of a philosopher, or rather, perhaps, of a martyr or hero, they seem to have thought and suffered so much."

"Nobody knows what he's thinkin' about all the time. He's older'n his own grandfather," said Joe.

Schuyler fished in his pocket, and was as delighted as the baby to draw out a gaudy jumping-jack. Dorothy often provided him with such ammunition for a sudden emergency. He smiled gratefully at her as she stood in the door of the little cottage talking with Miss Brown.

"He's goin' to make an improvement on it, sure," laughed Joe, as little Schuyler, with returning gravity, thoughtfully pulled the string. "But, now he's quiet I've been wanting to have a little talk with you, Mr. Schuyler. Them Pattens——"

"Who is that going down the path by the fountain, Joe?" interrupted Schuyler, with a quick frown.

"Why, that looks like Mr. Hallett Fallon, I guess," said Joe reluctantly.

"What is he doing here?" cried Schuyler, in such a strident voice that the boy stirred uneasily upon his breast. "Does he come often?"

"Well, now and then," assented Joe. "He likes to dilly-daddle around, talkin' to the men that comes in to see after their kids. Some of 'em thinks he's a heap fairer than the old man and Skinner. He makes 'em fine promises."

"Does he mean them?" said Schuyler.

"Not to my notion," said Joe, with a furtive glance at Schuyler's stern face. "Well, he ain't such an out 'n' out bad feller, Mr. Schuyler; he's jest a little light-weight, and he likes to take his ease. I suspicion he's jest holdin' 'em off from doin' any damage till the company can make up their minds what to do. That's my guess. But if they're goin' to send for furriners to take the men's places, and there's any fuss about it, he'll have the soldiers down on 'em quicker'n wink. But land o' liberty, what a smooth tongue he has!"

"And is that all he comes for, Joe?"

"Well, he says he likes to look at the ball games, sometimes; and the boys seems to favour him, too. He give 'em new balls last week."

"The ball games indeed!" cried Schuyler. "The puppy!"

Joe gave another timid glance. He remembered the old hot flashes of temper at the mines, but it was long since there had been any reminder of them. And now, almost in a moment, the brief whirlwind had passed by. Joe could almost think he had imagined it when Schuyler spoke presently in the old, calm, even tones:

"You were going to say something, Joe."

"Yes, I've been a little sorry for them Pattens

that lives next door to us. They've got the most swarmin' family! They'd be great folks settlin' a Territory! but jest here, there's too many of 'em for any comfort. Eleven of 'em, I think, besides some that's dead, and Nancy as lives at Mrs. Parson's. And there's goin' to be trouble, Mr. Schuyler, before many days is over. The wages at the mills was cut down again yesterday, and Patten says they ain't goin' to stand it. They couldn't but jest live before, and he says he'll be hanged if he's goin' to work the heart out of him jest for the privilege of bein' a day or two longer starvin' to death. There he goes now. Patten! Halloo, Patten! This way, I want to introduce you to Mr. Page—Mr. Schuyler Page"—emphasised Joe, very dignified and proud in parading his intimate acquaintance.

Patten, with red, surly face, and legs very wide apart, nodded with sturdy ungraciousness. Patten's life had been embittered with hard toil, and any man with a whole coat and a clean shirt he recognised as a natural enemy—a task-master unjustly enjoying the comforts of which he was defrauded.

Schuyler ignored the scowling looks. "I am sorry to hear that there has been another reduction in wages," he said kindly. "It is very hard to bear, but we must remember the times. Every interest in the country is suffering, at present.

The directors of the mills tell me that they are not earning two per cent. on their stock, and cannot carry on the business at such a ruinous rate. A man must get some reasonable return for his investment, you know, or he has no stimulus to make it."

An ugly sneer distorted Patten's face. "They git ten, yes, twenty per cent., I guess, on everything they've lawfully put in," he said. "There's ways of puttin' in a hundred dollars, and havin' it mean five hundred, and more, in stock. Of course somebody's got to work hard to pay interest on all that paper that hain't cost 'em a red cent. Oh, I know it looks all right on the books. But there's other people keepin' books, too. Mebbe they'll have to foot up some other accounts before they git through."

"If you have a grievance, come out with it, my man," said Schuyler, with ready sympathy, "but do everything fair and square. No good will ever come of violence; I have seen it tried too many times. It is sure to recoil upon the heads that planned it."

"Yes, you're right," replied Patten grimly; "evil is goin' to come back on the heads that's planned it."

"There is goin' to be a strike in the Banner Mills, as I take it," explained Lame Joe. "I guess he don't mean nothin' worse."

"I am sorry for that," said Schuyler, as he walked to and fro, the contented child still nestling in his arms. "I hope you will do nothing rash. Small wages are surely better than none; and this is a bad time for a strike, with the fall so near, and winter so surely coming on."

"They're expectin' a big order," said Patten, with shining eyes; "and if there's nobody to work, they'll be losin' their hundreds of dollars to our cents. There's some comfort in that. I'd like to pull them all down as low as we be."

"And then?" said Schuyler, pausing, and fixing his keen eyes upon him. "And then?"

"Well, I don't know," stammered Patten. "I don't know what you're drivin' at."

"Why, man, how much better off would you be?" cried Schuyler. "Don't you see you are fighting yourself? If there were no capital to invest, if you had crushed the brains that organise and invent, what would it matter how many willing hands there might be? Don't you see it is like defrauding and destroying a member of your own body? Would it be a satisfaction to send a bullet through your own head?"

"But the heads may pound the hands to a jelly; that's all right," said Patten gloomily.

"God forbid!" cried Schuyler quickly.

"There is much to be learned on both sides. The head must learn, too, that its greatest happiness and security lies in the well-being of the hands. There must be honest trust and love and service on one side as well as the other."

The man stared blankly. "I don't know as I sense your meanin'," he said sullenly, "but I guess I know which side you're on."

"On yours!" cried Schuyler brightly. "Try me. Come and talk with me again some time. Perhaps I can help you. I promise you I shall use all my influence to help you."

The man stared again, the radiance in Schuyler's noble face somewhat penetrating his gloom.

"Perhaps," he said reluctantly. "You are not so high and mighty as my lord Fallon, nor such a durned screw as old Jabez Skinner. But——" He shook his head, and turned lifelessly away, as one in whom the constant disappointment of life had shut all pathway to the deceitful approaches of hope.

"Poor fellow!" said Schuyler, looking after his discouraged, round-shouldered figure.

"He's a tough one, though," said Lame Joe, as he pointed to several dim shapes, hovering around just outside the grounds, evidently waiting for him. "I guess there's goin' to be a

meetin' to-night. There's Daniel Wiggins—he's the head of 'em—and a dozen others. There's lots of trouble brewin', so they say. And sometimes I think Patten has some rights on his side. That Mr. Skinner must have made a heap of money this summer. There ain't much that he's denyin' himself, that's sure. His new house is fit for a king, and he has a boy in great big buttons to open the front door. And you must have seen them high-steppin' horses, and Mr. Wickham ridin' out in the new dark green coach, with Miss Barbara, pale as a lily, sittin' beside him. It makes a sight of talk, people don't see where it all comes from ; though some say that Mr. Fallon himself don't look none too happy.

"There was somethin' I thought about tellin' you," he added, looking carefully around. "Shan't I take the little feller, Mr. Schuyler? No?" as nothing could dislodge the small, clinging hands. "Well, as I was goin' to say—not that I'd encourage such a thing in Pete, and not that he'd ever breathe a word to anybody but me, but he heard pretty high words betwixt Mr. Skinner and young Mr. Fallon, as he was tidyin' up the front office to-day. There was somethin' about the books that Mr. Hallett said he couldn't understand, and Mr. Skinner said mebbe he hadn't the head for 'em. And then

Mr. Hallett said he'd have somebody down from Athens that did have the head for 'em."

"Never mind, Joe," said Schuyler; "I don't know that it is any of our business. And you must caution young Pete never to repeat anything he hears. The secrets of his employers should be sacred to him."

"And, indeed, they are, sir," said Lame Joe. "He'd never breathe 'em to a soul but his old dad, sir; but he was a little scared, never hearin' 'em come to words afore, and, mebbe, a bit pleased, too, to see Mr. Skinner gittin' some of the sass he's allus givin' to others. They say Mr. Hallett ain't none too pleased with the plans about his sister and young Mr. Wickham. Well, now, we must be gittin' home: we are keepin' your pretty lady waitin' too long."

The little boy had fallen asleep, and was removed unresistingly. In the carriage he awoke with a little whimper at the change.

"Sky! Sky!" he cried, stretching out his arms.

"Mr. Schuyler," corrected Joe.

"Sky," persisted the baby. "I love you, Sky."

"Don't he speak plain, and jest goin' in his third year?" cried Joe admiringly. "He's that proud he never says nothin' till he's got it as plain as a man. Come, now," he added coaxingly, "see the pretty long walk all around by

the flowers and the fountain. He ain't goin' home yet; he's goin' all through the beautiful long walk—as long as long."

"Sky," repeated the child, "I love you as much—as much as a sidewalk all the way to Europe!"

"Now hear the sense of the child!" cried the proud Joe. "His own grandfather couldn't 'a' put it better. He loves a long walk jest like heaven. And Pete's got good sense, too, Mr. Schuyler. Don't you be scared about him. He'll be as deep as a well. I says to him most every day—'*Quo honor ducit*,' says I, and you'll come to all the biggest things in life, jest like Mr. Schuyler."

Schuyler shook his head, laughing.

"Then Pete, he says, 'That's just what I'm teachin' Toni'—he don't mean nothin', he loves his joke. But you'd ought to see that dog! He can leave him guardin' a piece of meat for an hour. '*Quo honor ducit!*' he says, and if Toni is as hungry as a bear, he don't dare to touch it till Pete gives the word."

"They are very powerful words, no mistake," laughed Schuyler, hastening to meet Dorothy.

"You are tired," she said, as after the first greeting he walked along in an absent, preoccupied way, a shadow growing upon his bright face. "You give yourself no rest."

"Dorothy," he said abruptly, "it is odd that Hallett Fallon is so fond of the Park. Does he annoy you in any way? Does he bring any more flowers?"

"Oh, no!" she laughed mischievously. "I should think he would, but perhaps he doesn't care to spend so much on Pete's Toni."

Schuyler could not forbear an answering smile. "He is a handsome fellow," he said magnanimously, "and goes to a better tailor than I do. He looked well in that light tweed suit this evening. I suppose he is exceedingly clever and entertaining, too, when you come to talk with him," he said tentatively.

"Why, yes," said Dorothy demurely. "When he tells me how pretty he thinks the place, and how much he admires you for planning it, I find him very entertaining, and cannot help liking him for it."

"Indeed!" cried Schuyler, and strode on silently.

Dorothy walked patiently by his side.

"I believe I must be tired," he said wearily, at last. "Don't mind me, I am only fit company for myself."

"So good as that!" cried Dorothy brightly. "Then you are fit company for the king."

"But not for you, 'little brother,'" he cried, taking her hand. "I should like to

know what you are honestly thinking this very minute."

"I am thinking that 'only Saharas have no weeds,' which is very complimentary when you take it all in," she laughed, her loyal face upturned to his.

They were close upon the little red cottage. Cousin Delia was in the garden overseeing the tearful Nancy, who was weeding and watering the flower beds at one and the same time.

"Such a good time to work, in the cool of the evenin'," Cousin Delia explained, "but that ungrateful Nancy——"

"How have you been?" cried Dorothy, in her sweet voice.

"Never better in my life. I've felt like a girl of sixteen all day. There!" she said, with an uneasy glance around, "I hadn't ought to have said that. It's sure to bring bad luck. Most likely I'll be laid up in my bed to-morrow."

Her superstitious soul, for the moment, was full of chagrin; but she pushed it aside. She was bursting with an important secret. She had been watching to see Dorothy go by.

"Hev you bought your weddin' dress, Dorothy?" she asked, advancing with unusual alacrity to the fence.

"I don't understand," said Dorothy.

"Why, I guess you'll get an invite; and there

ain't such a heap of time to get ready either. It'll be before snow flies, Mis' Skinner says."

"You don't mean that foolish report about Wickham Skinner and Barbara Fallon?"

"Foolish report!" cried Cousin Delia, a malicious shine in her eyes. "Why, it's announced. Mebbe it'll be in the papers tonight. Well, he's a likely young man, and allus dresses like a gentleman. Mis' Skinner says he has more'n fifty neckties at this present minnit."

"And you are sure it is so, Cousin Delia?" said Dorothy gravely, lingering while Schuyler walked slowly on, as he usually did at such encounters.

"Dead sure! Mis' Skinner told me herself, this very afternoon. She's fairly got to the top of the heap. But she's been very polite to me lately. I shouldn't wonder if we'd git real intimate. I'm goin' to the weddin', of course. It will be the biggest thing that's happened in these parts for years."

"I thought you warned me against her, Cousin Delia," and Dorothy smiled.

"Mebbe I did," she said sharply, "but we ain't so far apart as I thought at one spell. We've made up, anyway, and there ain't no more to be said about it. When you bury a quarrel, they say you hadn't ought to set up a tomb-

stone! Don't be in such a flusterin' hurry. Schuyler is always so impatient and masterful!"

"Not at all," cried Dorothy; "but he is very busy at present; he has some important work to do this very night."

"Well, whatever he does or he don't do," rejoined Cousin Delia, "I guess he won't never rob Moses of his place in the catechism."

"I don't care to have him," laughed Dorothy joyously.

"Well, I wish you'd come over to-morrer and see if I could turn my black silk. When is Tom comin' home from the woods?"

"Next week, I think," cried Dorothy, already far up the road.

CHAPTER VIII.

A PEAK IN DARIEN.

SCHUYLER had returned early in the chill of a November evening, full of a new idea he had in his mind and anxious for long uninterrupted hours in which to work it out. He was disappointed to find Mr. Beals waiting in the library for him.

Dorothy arose to give them the chance for private conversation that Mr. Beals evidently wished. She had found him very absent-minded, with a hunted, apprehensive expression, very unlike his usual air of prosperous self-satisfaction. Strangely a memory of ten years before had been continually recurring to her mind. How his face had aged and sobered since that never-to-be-forgotten day when he had laughed with such good-natured amusement over Cousin Hiram's fatuous investments! Now there was surely a reflection of the same carking care in his own troubled eyes. She went out softly and shut the door.

"We are in a heap of trouble, as I suppose you know," began Mr. Beals, plunging at once into the subject. "The strike is bad enough, coming just as we have several excellent orders; but there are other perplexities besides." He paused, frowning. "There are shortages and deficits in the accounts that are perplexing, to say the least. Mr. Fallon is confident that everything is all right, but Hallett, who has been waking up lately and showing more ability than I ever gave him credit for, thinks there would be no harm in giving the books a thorough going over. You see no objections to that, do you? I want to consult you about several matters."

"I am somewhat surprised that you come to me," replied Schuyler smiling, "when I have so little practical ability."

"I believe you are an honest man, Schuyler, and would give an honest opinion," said Mr. Beals, colouring slightly. "Your advice would have a certain disinterested value that might help me in making up my mind. I don't say that it would be wise to follow it to all lengths. I must ask you, also, to regard everything in the strictest confidence."

Then followed an outpouring of the details of the situation, which Schuyler had not the heart to repel, as it afforded Mr. Beals such evident

relief in the telling. He gave to it all that ready attention and sympathy which is help of itself, and such advice as was practicable under the circumstances. It was impossible to do much for the cause of the striking men, although his heart was in it—until the internal dissensions had been happily laid.

"It may all be a mistake," said Mr. Beals, after an hour of excited volubility, "but we shall have an expert here within a week or ten days, and shall know the truth one way or the other. We have been making, as you see, some investigation ourselves, but the accounts are complicated, and we only suspect rascality, without, as yet, being able to lay our hands on the proof."

"If I fully understand the person you suspect," said Schuyler, "I am afraid he has been in an only too good school. Oh, I beg your pardon!"

Mr. Beals' face was full of a painful anxiety.

"We won't discuss that," he said, with some dignity. "But please be absolutely secret. I can trust you implicitly, I know. We are trying to conduct ourselves in a way to disarm all suspicion, but we have unusual shrewdness to contend against."

He drew a bulky parcel from his overcoat pocket.

"I called, particularly, to ask a small favour of you to-night. Here is a bundle of papers that we consider might prove important in clearing up any possible obscurity in the books; they might be enlightening, perhaps incriminating, in case of some awkward accident of any kind. Hallett was surprised to find them in the office desk, where, indeed"—the frown growing deeper—"I think they had been only temporarily left, on their way to a place of greater security, or, possibly, the office fire. They are important papers, always left in the safe, although I have felt for some time that Fallon should have them in his own private keeping. They are letters, receipts, what not, that are his personal property, besides being necessary for the protection of us all. But Hallett, for some reasons, thought it better not to take them home at present. His father has been under the weather lately—perhaps you have heard, symptoms of heart trouble, the doctors advise him to be careful. He has had too much on his mind. Well, to come to the point, I have taken charge of them myself for a week or two, at his request, till we can find ourselves on safer footing.

"Hallett wished me to take them to my own house, preferring that to the bank since we want to keep everything so quiet; but our young doctor's ship is coming in to-morrow or next

day, and Mrs. Beals and I are going to the city to meet him. Now for the question: would you mind very much putting these papers in your safe for a day or two, till I ask for them?"

Schuyler demurred. "I could not be responsible for them," he said.

"I take all risks. Oblige me," cried Mr. Beals insistently. "It is a whim of mine. This seems to me the very last place where, in case the loss was discovered, a person would expect to find any property belonging to Fallon & Co.," he said, with an attempt at a laugh. "Keep them only a few days. I shall sleep easier."

"Very well," said Schuyler, pitying the man's evident nervousness. "Put them in yourself," he added, opening the safe. "Lock it and take the key. I have nothing there but a few old coins and some family jewels. Keep it till I ask you for it."

As the outer door closed upon Mr. Beals, the library door opened upon Dorothy. She knew well all the symptoms when the great creative fever was coming upon Schuyler, when he would know no difference between night and day. Indeed, as he had often told her, the idea which had been a pillar of cloud by day often became a pillar of fire by night, and threw a revealing flame into dim corners which had been hopelessly baffling hitherto.

Dorothy often worked with him at such times as this, a silent, noiseless other self, looking up authorities, moving the delicate instruments with the touch of a feather ; mute and motionless for an hour if he did not need her, but ready with a smile of quick appreciation when he looked up in the joy of a small triumph.

But sometimes, in the stress of a great inspiration, he could brook no interference. He must wrestle alone with the angel idea until it blessed him. At such times he liked to have her lie on the couch at his side, sleeping in spite of herself, after he had wrapped her tenderly in the fleeciness of soft bright shawls.

He had long been working on two lines of thought, the one being how to extract the stored-up power in coal, without submitting it to the well-known wastefulness of furnaces—how, as the problem has been stated, to reduce coal to a condition in which it will, when brought into conjunction with the inexhaustible reservoir of oxygen in the atmosphere, give us the necessary elements for the production of an electric battery.

In following this out, he had made some important improvements in a heating apparatus, which was to be tested at the works and one or two other large establishments, the coming winter. Mr. Manning was already enthusiastic over it.

"If we manage it right there will be 'millions in it,'" he said.

But all Schuyler's heart was in the development of an electrical motor of simplest construction, but wonderful power, to be used in air ships made of aluminium, which he believed were soon to displace all other forms of locomotion in speed, safety, and popularity.

It was to this he turned like an arrow from the bow, when Mr. Beals at last released him; and Dorothy, lifting the cover from the exquisite model upon the great library table, stole softly to her pillows and book in the grace of absolute silence.

Hour after hour passed by, and still the keen face, full of the undying fire of genius, bent unweariedly over its work. Suddenly he gave a joyful cry. Dorothy, in her white wrapper, was by his side in an instant.

"I believe I have got it, 'little brother,'" he cried, pale with excitement; "I never came upon anything so quick before. Just in the little half hour I have been sitting here——"

"The half hour, Sky!" repeated Dorothy. "Do you know it is four o'clock in the morning?"

Schuyler looked at her in a dazed way, brushing his hand across his eyes.

"Is it possible!" he cried. "I wasn't sure of any time. I should have said, if anything, that

it was nearer five minutes than half an hour. What a strange feeling it gives one! When a great idea has hold of you, time is annihilated—there is no time. I can understand now," he laughed, "how in the great creative periods of the earth a thousand years could have easily become as one day. But, oh, Dot," he added joyfully, "just to think that I have got it!"

"You deserve it, my Hercules; you have earned it," she cried proudly.

> "'The heights by brave men won and kept,
> Were not attained by sudden flight;
> But they, while their companions slept,
> Were toiling upward in the night.'"

"Do not spoil me, little comrade," he said. "I was conscious of no sacrifice. I could not have done otherwise. One is constrained to be obedient to his heavenly vision. And how explain the vast joy of it! Is it because one cannot find out a secret law like this without drawing nearer to the great Worker behind it all? Is it, as my dear Captain used to say, the exquisite happiness of being a channel for the great life current in any form? How dreadful if we had been born in Africa, Dot! It is the nineteenth century there, and what have they to show for it? Was the Captain right? Is there something inconceivably quickening and illu-

minating that has come to some lands? How else explain the difference? Have we been dropped into a nation that is one of the best conductors of the invisible powers? Are we in the first power-circle?" he laughed excitedly as he walked to and fro.

"You would be Hercules wherever you were born," she repeated proudly. "Power comes to him who has made himself ready to use it."

"This is one of the greatest things I have ever done, Dot," he continued, wrapped in the wonder of it. "It will revolutionise travel. Just think of starting out at once for any point to which you wish to go. No tunnels to dig, no rails to lay, no fear of icebergs or rocks or shoals, far above all bewildering fogs, and with all infinity in which to dodge an opposing craft, over, under, as well as right and left. How would you like to run over to London in a couple of days, Dot? What do you say to that?"

"It is fascinating," she cried, with clasped hands.

"And the cheapness of it!" said Schuyler. "Everybody could be having a little taste of foreign travel. It is pleasant to think how much will be added to the sum of human happiness."

"It is right," said Dorothy, in her sweet

voice; "the gift of the great should always overflow the dry land of the poor."

"It would be a developing thing, Dot," he said, pursuing her own channel; "the human race, whether it likes it or not, must grow the faster into one family. They talk of savagery and superstition fleeing before the advancing railroads; perhaps we may see still greater achievements. Perhaps, even," he laughed, "those swift, beneficent ships on their new lines of travel may be the beginning of civilisation among those unfriendly powers of the air. Seriously," he said, growing graver, "we are on the eve of the most radical and revolutionary changes. He who lives the next ten years will live in the most exciting and important age the world has ever known."

Dorothy laid her hand soothingly upon her shoulder.

> "'What times are little? To the sentinel,
> That hour is regal *he* mounts on guard,'"

she could not forbear quoting for all her pride.

"Ah, you shall see, sweet!" he replied. "It will not be long before there are plenty of 'pilots of the purple twilight.' I invite you now to take an air trip with me, in about a year, to the mysterious land of Tibet. We will hang, poised in our eagle ship, over the sacred city of

Lh'asa, so long guarded from the eyes of the profane. We will steal photographs of the red and black lamas, and take a census of the mahatmas and 'astral souls.'"

"How delightful!" cried Dorothy. "It will be like coming down into those locked closets of Flatland. Shall I take any luggage?"

"Perhaps a parachute life-preserver, if you are nervous; but your travelling dress will do for the short time you are gone."

They laughed joyously together in the flawlessness of perfect comradeship.

"I must make a little more finished model," said Schuyler, returning to his work lovingly, "and then I shall take it to Athens to submit it to the best authorities there. There would be great returns of every kind if it should prove a success. I will not say it would not be pleasant to have a plethoric pocket-book. You shall walk in silk attire, Dot. And horses! yes I should like to keep horses again. Do you remember old Billy, and the joy of the free, reckless motion? We will have the best in the market; we will laugh at Mrs. Skinner's green tortoise of a coach as we scour by on our Arab steeds. I shall buy them as soon as I have paid for the new rooms at the Park.

"Another thing," he added thoughtfully: "there is a poor threadbare genius whom I met

the last time I was in Athens, living in a garret, and working on this very same problem. Poor fellow! he was nearly as far as I; he had taken all but the last two or three steps; he had been working on it for years. I think it would break his heart to come so near, and have another step in before him. His last model failed, one could hardly tell why. I have made the slightest change in it, and yet it makes all the difference between failure and success. I think I must see him, Dot. If he has not taken that last little step, I still cannot rob him of all the fruit of his sleepless, joyless, toiling years. What would be the right thing? Shall I buy his invention, or would you give him some small partnership in the royalties the discovery must command?"

"As you think best, Schuyler," she cried, with kindling eyes. "I do not know what men would call right or wrong. But this I do know —it is not 'the remorseless getting of money'— it is riding again in 'a chariot of the sun.'"

"And that is actually the only safe conveyance in the country of the 'New Dimension,' as I have found out," laughed Schuyler.

"Well, you must not do any more riding of any kind, at present," said Dorothy anxiously. "Your first duty is to rest. Come, you might yet get two or three hours of sleep."

"It is strange," said the unheeding Schuyler, still pacing the floor, every nerve alive with the electric force that had been thrilling through him, "that it is not our earthly environment, but our invisible, that determines how great a person it is possible for a man to be. There is encouragement for everybody in that. All depends upon how many doors and windows there are to the little gray workshop within. Who can compute the length and breadth and height of an idea-bomb? You may live in a nutshell of a house, but your idea shakes the earth."

"It has certainly very much shaken you," cried Dorothy, suddenly turning out all the lights, and leading him unwillingly to the stairway.

They paused for a moment at the great hall window, to look at the gray, foggy world just beginning to be visible in the cold light of the autumn morning. Far away to the southwest there was a dull red glow that arrested their attention.

"It looks as if there had been a fire down in the Center," said Dorothy.

"Yes, and it is in the direction of the Banner Mills," said Schuyler, with a passing interest.

"And now must I be tucked away, *nolens volens*, 'little brother'? Do your best, but how do you suppose eyes can be closed that are full

of the splendid vision of a new world? that have seen the brain-clouds part just a moment—with an intoxicating glimpse of 'the undiscovered range and splendour of our lives.'

> "'Then felt I like some watcher of the skies,
> When a new planet swims into his ken;
> Or like stout Cortes when with eagle eyes
> He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
> Looked at each other with a wild surmise—
> Silent upon a peak in Darien.'

"Yes, Dorothy, breathless upon my peak in Darien!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE SAME STREAM OF BEING.

THE situation in Penfield was growing darker with every day of the advancing fall. The cold winds and sullen dripping rains of November were carrying discouragement and desperation to the squalid homes of the striking mill-hands, while the company was holding out obstinately, and farther than ever from submitting to the dictation of the employés. There were rumours that a large body of Italians and Germans were soon to be imported to fill the places of the rebellious men, in which case there would be fierce resistance ; and Patten had darkly hinted to Lame Joe that, if they wouldn't hear the voice of starving men, they should certainly hear dynamite.

Schuyler, in the midst of his own absorbing plans, took the keenest interest in the situation. He had tried to interview Mr. Beals, but had lately found him in anything but a conciliatory

mood. He had been greatly harassed over a fire that had lately occurred. The small office at the side of the mills had been burned to the ground.

"In the middle of the night," he said, "with no apparent cause. Mr. Skinner again lays it to the wires, but the insurance agent, who has examined everything, states that the fire originated in an entirely different part of the room; he thinks it must have been the work of an incendiary."

"That would not be strange when the town is so full of idle and imbittered men," said Schuyler.

"No," cried Mr. Beals irritably, "but why didn't they burn the mills while they were about it? Mr. Fallon has arrested two or three men that Skinner thought were acting in a suspicious way. But I am not satisfied, and neither is Hallett. I suppose you have heard that the books are almost entirely destroyed? Part of them were in the safe, and are legible, though badly charred; but the most important were again strangely left in the office desk, and are nothing—literally nothing—but dust and ashes. Skinner professes to be heart-broken over his carelessness. It is a miserable piece of business."

"When were you expecting your expert?"

"The very next day," said Mr. Beals gloomily.

"I think I will take those papers you have in your safe, and let Hallett look them over again. I will come for them some time to-day."

"With all my heart," said Schuyler. "It would be a relief to me."

At the meetings of the turbulent workmen, Schuyler met with still less success. In vain he tried to show them that if some superfluously rich men did not exist, there would be no capital to organise the great undertakings that put comfort and competence in the hands of the many.

On this same day that he had met Mr. Beals, he had gone in once more. He tried to set before them that there was no such fatal mistake as violence—that anarchy and communism were like deadly diseases that would end in destroying all organised society, that invaluable protection as needful to the poor as to the rich. He begged them to recognise, indeed, the sacredness of existing property, for with it all civilisation must surely fall.

"'Property is theft!'" cried Daniel Wiggins, hoarsely repeating an old watchcry.

"It is false!" replied Schuyler; "it is, instead, the engine that moves the whole machinery of industry. It is wickedly misleading to teach that everybody who succeeds in life must be an enemy of the human race. There can be no greater blunder than to try to undermine the

security of property. You will see it yourselves, men, when, some day in the good times that are coming, by patience and industry you shall own your own little house and bit of land.

"Why, Patten," he cried, addressing that sulky acquaintance, frowning darkly from the seat just in front of him, "don't you know that it is the most perfect idiocy to throw yourself and your dynamite bomb against the machinery of the law—that law which the most enlightened men have decided to be for the best interest of us all, for you as well as for me? We are all in the same stream of being. Don't you know that you cannot hurt your neighbour without more cruelly harming yourself? Have you learned nothing from the history of the past few years? Has it not shown plainly that in all disorderly attacks, all outrages upon the law, the final victim has always been the labourer himself?"

A confused outcry arose, some apparently half impressed, but an angry, unreasoning dissent gaining ground.

"Hear the 'ristocrat!" cried Patten. "I say, down with 'em all!"

"He's been good to our women and children," cried a friendly voice in the crowd.

"Why shouldn't he be?" said Daniel Wiggins, the greatest spokesman of them all. "These rich people owe us a living. If they won't let

us earn it, they ought to give it. If they won't give it, we must take it. The laws needn't be made all one way, eh, Patten?"

"No, we'll be takin' a hand in makin' some laws of our own, that maybe *they'll* be runnin' up against," said Patten, with surly triumph.

"Yes," said Daniel Wiggins, with his gloomy oratory; "it is a war of blood against gold; it is the million sons of Lazarus standing up against the gold millions in the purse of Dives. Don't let this man juggle with you! He may have been playing friendly with your women, but it is easy to see which side he is on."

"And we'll know where to find him when we want him," said Patten meaningly.

"Shame! Shame!" cried some of the better disposed, whose families had already been saved from bitter want by Schuyler's ever ready help.

Then arose a tumult of cries: "He needn't talk to starving men!" "You don't know him—he's the best friend we got!" "He's a fraud!" "Hurrah for Page!" "Down with the 'ristocrats!"

It was useless to try to stem the tide, and Schuyler came away feeling that he had made more enemies than friends.

Just outside he again met Mr. Beals, with his daughter Kitty, who, worn out with her arduous duties, had come home for a long vacation.

"There will be great suffering this winter if this situation continues much longer," said Schuyler, still full of the subject.

"It is their own fault," Mr. Beals replied wearily. "If a man will not work, neither let him eat."

"That is sound doctrine," said Schuyler. "I am sorry for the women and children though, especially since illness from privation and unhealthy surroundings has begun to attack them."

"Yes," said Kitty tenderly. "Dr. Peters had special prayers for them last evening."

"The best prayer for the health of a city is the prayer of sanitation and cleanliness," said Schuyler quickly. "It is a great discovery when we find that we must be the answer to our own prayers. I beg your pardon, Miss Kitty."

"I am more in accord than you think," she said brightly. "I am sure men are beginning to see that prayer is a compound article, and that for every word there should be a deed to speak still louder. A prayer is certainly half granted when we are ready to help in the answering of it."

"By the way," said Mr. Beals, "I was just going to ask you what new project you had going on at the Park? I saw such a crowd of women at the gates."

"Oh, that is Dorothy's," he said lightly, disclaiming all credit for the plan that they had carefully elaborated together. "I am going there now. If you are on the way home, won't you stop and see for yourself?"

"I may as well do that as anything," said Mr. Beals irresolutely. "This waiting and uncertainty has upset me entirely. If we are ever back in the good, old, healthy routine of everyday life, I shall know how to be grateful. The situation and the enforced inaction are unnerving to a degree. Oh, there is Charley's shingle! got it up yesterday," he said, pointing across the street, with a brighter look in his face than Schuyler had seen in a long time. "Have you seen the young doctor? What do you think of him, Schuyler?"

"A keen, wide-awake fellow that any father would be proud to own for a son," said Schuyler heartily.

"Why hasn't Tom been to see him?" said Mr. Beals, with a gratified smile.

"I thought you knew Tom was in Athens, taking a course of lectures. He will return, I hope, next week. Oh, you'll see enough of Tom! The truth is I haven't dared write him the news. He is quite capable," he laughed, "of importing a contagious disease, or breaking his own head, for the encouragement of the young sawbones."

There was a busy hum in the big room at the side of the cottage as the trio drew near.

"The boys have been a little disappointed about their gymnasium," explained Schuyler, "but really there was no other thing to do in the pressure of the season before us. They are not altogether defrauded either—they can still have an hour or two of fun in the evening."

He opened the door of the bright, clean room, and disclosed over fifty women busily sewing on garments of every description. Every face was interested, and hope had displaced the look of dull endurance which was the dominant expression of so many of their class in the streets of Penfield Center.

Dorothy and Miss Brown were superintending the work, and slowly imparting skill to the clumsy fingers. From a half open door, at one end, the most appetising odours floated in, and the familiar figure of Aunt Patty was seen moving to and fro with skillet and saucepan. The eager eyes of the women followed her now and then, as they looked up from their work to wonder at the slow-moving hands of the clock.

Dorothy, in the plainest of blue flannel gowns, in which her pure pale complexion looked more than ever dazzlingly fair, came up to welcome them.

"In pretty good running order, isn't it?" she

said smiling, "and only, a week old. The first day there were only three women. They were so suspicious they did not seem able to believe that we really meant them a kindness. But now there are so many I am afraid we shall soon have to turn applicants away."

"Are you teaching them to make their own clothes?" said Kitty. "It is a beautiful charity."

"Hush!" cried Dorothy, putting up a warning hand. "We do not call it a charity. We hire them to sew for fifty cents a day. We pay them wages for honest work, and, besides, give them a warm lunch in the middle of the day, which is very popular, I can assure you."

"And what will you do with the garments that they make? Shall you sell them?"

"Oh, not to the general public. At the low prices we should ask, that might hurt some legitimate industries. No, if the sewing women are needing them in their own families, we shall sell to them at a merely nominal price. Where there are needy sick people, or helpless children, we shall give them. If there is anything over it can go to hospitals, perhaps, or orphan asylums. We have a large order now from Gray's church, which is very wealthy, you know, and is going to co-operate with us."

Kitty blushed faintly. "That church will not disappoint you," she said.

"We shall need all the help we can get, if we are able to keep on through the winter. Gray has already interested several organisations in our favour, and I shall hope something from Dr. Peters."

"And can you give up all your time to it?" enquired Kitty admiringly.

"Not quite such a sacrifice is required," replied Dorothy. "We have been most fortunate in our helpers. Miss Brown, you know, cuts and plans the work admirably—Aunt Patty and Uncle Jake have come down to live for the winter, and will take all the care of the lunch-room; and Mrs. Manning and Mrs. Fletcher, and two or three others, will each have a day to supervise. Probably they need only give an hour or two when everything is systematised. The women are very self-respecting, and take an honest pride in it all. They are not very skilful, but it is almost pathetic to see how they strive to give us full measure of good honest work."

"The wages may seem small," said Schuyler, "but they mean food and fire for just so many families."

"Yes," said Dorothy, "we are sorry to turn anybody away, but we try to reserve this room for mothers with large families, and girls who are supporting sick and aged parents."

Mr. Beals looked on with a growing astonishment.

"You cannot keep it up, Schuyler. It will cost a mint of money. Have you the Bank of England behind you?"

"I shall do what I can," said Schuyler, with undaunted cheerfulness—"at least till the Banner Mills can make up its mind. And others, no doubt, will be ready to supplement the work. Kind hearts will be ready to give in charity this bitter winter, and I hope we are all beginning to see that this is the only form charity should take in assisting the able-bodied. We must be careful not to degrade our fellow-creatures into tramps and paupers. Save the self-respecting man or woman that is in them."

"You are a good fellow, Schuyler!" said Mr. Beals warmly.

"Don't commit yourself," he laughed. "To let you into a secret, I am really about as selfish a body as you know. I am doing it all as a measure of self-preservation. Perhaps I am even a trifle cowardly. I have simply learned a lesson with my head, quite independent of any moral quality. I am convinced that the welfare of these poor women, and others like them, is for my own best well-being. I see that the whole human race is marching on together, and every crippling of a weak brother in the rear

must retard the advance. Every wrong or injustice sent from the front must return to strike the one who is proudly leading the column."

"Fletcher's moral boomerang," said Mr. Beals, with a faint smile.

"Exactly," laughed Schuyler. "You see I do not deserve any credit; it is the simplest common sense and self-protection."

"It is a long while getting around—sometimes," said Mr. Beals, shrugging his shoulders. "I hope we don't all get our deserts."

"The curve of the projectile has a longer or shorter parabola," said Schuyler, "but surely and swiftly, to my mind, it is returning. I only wish such a great truth might be taught dispassionately—like any other axiom of science—in every public school in the land. It would prove one of the most important factors in the training of a good citizen. It could be illustrated and confirmed by the parable of all history, both in nations and individuals! I wish that every boy could be as sure of it as that there is a sun in the heavens. It would make this a much safer country to live in."

"It would stiffen the backbone of good citizenship in a very common-sense way," assented Mr. Beals. "Next to the desire to do right, must certainly be a clear vision of what a fool you are if you do wrong."

"That is it," replied Schuyler. "I do not claim to have climbed much farther than this. But I know that two and two make four, and I know the law of the 'moral boomerang.'"

"This idea of the solidarity of the race is a great fad in these days," said Mr. Beals, "but it does not appeal to me. For myself, I cannot make it a practical thing."

"The most practical in the world!" said Schuyler quickly. "I believe that the solution of all our vexed problems lies in its unfolding. As some thinker has put it: 'The law of the human race is solidarity governed by the eternal and immutable principles of ethics.' So do we forecast the great triumph of that future when Love will be all, and in all."

Cousin Delia's voice, raised in shrill reproach, broke in upon the conversation. She had arrived a few minutes before, sustained in the fatigue of her unusual walk by her ever burning curiosity. She had been looking over the work of the women with a grudging approbation, and had finally made up her mind to become a purchaser of some of the wonderfully cheap garments.

"And you won't sell me one of them flannel skirts for twenty-five cents?" she was saying indignantly, "and I jest doin' it to encourage you."

"No, they are thirty cents, Cousin Delia, and we can only sell them at that price to the women who make them," said Dorothy, in a low tone; "to the women and children who are half-naked, you know—not kept in cotton-wool like you and me."

"Well, it's a good price you are gettin' out of 'em for such coarse stuff," she said in a loud tone, the old red spot in her cheeks. "Of course if I'd knowed you were calculatin' to make money out of the thing, I shouldn't 'a' spoke."

One or two women looked up suspiciously, but the bell just then rang for luncheon, and made a happy diversion. Cousin Delia consented to be placated with a sandwich and a cup of coffee, although she met poor kindly Aunt Patty with the greatest stiffness and reserve. She shook her head over the coffee.

"Weak and muddy," she confided to Dorothy. "She don't know no more about cookin' than a cat. I might come down sometimes myself; it wouldn't be no great chore, with that stout woman I see you've got to help. What do you pay her for it, Dorothy?"

"Nothing outside of the roof that shelters her. She begged me to let her do it."

"Humph!" said Cousin Delia, somewhat disappointed. "Well, she saves board and fuel and lights. And I s'pose she was gittin' tired

with nothin' to do but sit in her parlour and hold her hands. She wasn't brought up to it. And of course you knowed I had plenty of work cut out for me at home?"

"Certainly," assented Dorothy, with too great promptness to be altogether flattering.

"Well, I must go. It looks like rain, and I hain't been well lately. The fact is," she said mysteriously, "I hain't seen a well day since I boasted that night. I'd ought to 'a' knowed better. No tellin' what's the matter. I had Dr. Hardy up lookin' for the complaint, but he hain't got no kind of purchase on it yit. Oh, by the way, what do you hear from Tom? I guess he was findin' it a little unhealthy to stay in these parts." Her shrewd eyes twinkled. "I hope he ain't goin' to be what folks calls 'blighted.'"

Dorothy laughed gayly.

"Not at all!" she cried. "I can't imagine anything ever blighting Tom. He is in the best of health and spirits. He will be home next week."

"Do tell!" said Cousin Delia, somewhat discomfited. "I guess mebbe he's heard that weddin' has been put off for a spell. Mis' Skinner says they all think it ain't no time to be marryin' or givin' in marriage while things is so upsot. But I think it hurts her some—she's been playin'

round considerable. Besides, Barbary has got a cough and is pinin' fearful. They're afeared she'll go into a decline like Laura. Well, good-bye. If them skirts don't go off, you can let me know.

"Don't fall over yourself hurryin' to open that door!" she added, with a grim smile to Schuyler, who was bowing her out with the courtesy she had always viewed with such suspicion. "To be sure, a little fresh air wouldn't do no harm in the room. I wisht I'd put a camphor bag 'round my neck."

That same night, on going home, Schuyler found a characteristic letter from Tom:

"My Dear Sky:

"I have had such an interview with Barbara! I was just going into High Street when my heart started and began to tremble under somebody's feet, and before I had fairly turned the corner and knew the reason why, my face had all 'blossomed in purple and red.' Yes, there was Barbara, as I might have known—my Barbara! —pale as a snowdrop, with that cloud of beautiful dark hair framing her pretty face, and with her dear little dimple-cleft chin.

"They must have thought I had gone home, as the lectures are over, or I am sure Papa Fallon would never have trusted her without a chaperon.

I had asked a musical friend of mine to send her tickets for his organ recital. They were difficult to procure—very select, you know—and she was tempted to go, as I hoped she would be. Ah, if anybody thinks he can keep me from seeing Bab !—

> " 'He knows not well the subtile ways
> I keep, and pass and turn again.'

"They say it was a fine concert, Bab and I, behind the pillar in the discreet friendliness of a high-backed pew, know that there will never be another one like it. The professor must have been detained. The organ was played by the angel Israfil !

"Perhaps you know that the wedding with Bottom the weaver will not take place this fall. Barbara had already given me her word that it should not. At the same time her father remains implacable. He worships success, she says, and thinks he sees in Wickham Skinner all the germs of a brilliant financier. What liquor has Oberon dropped upon his eyes ? The commonplace, illbred fellow ! To Charley Beals and me he has always been the most unutterable Philistine. To think of Bab—but that way madness lies !

"If I had a few months more I think I could prove to Mr. Fallon, and everybody else, that I

had as much pull on a future as Wickham Skinner. There are immense possibilities in a Page cocoon, as has already been proved. Do you know the great firm of Griffith & Co. has been pleased with my work at the lectures, and there has been some mention of a vacancy in their office with possibilities for the future? Could you not run over for a day before my return, and survey the situation? I am sure the reputation of my brilliant brother would have much to do in securing my good fortune. Gray, also, I expect to be a tower of strength, as he is so well known and popular in the city.

"I am leaving no stone unturned. For a short time this fall I was nearly submerged. If I had been living on the planet Mars under his two dreadful little moons Phobos and Deimos—Terror and Fear—I couldn't have been much more demoralised. But I have rallied. 'He who endures wins everything,' which makes it only a question of time when I shall marry Barbara!

"I have been thinking, also, that if I should settle in Athens, there would not be so many unpleasant complications as might attend a life in Penfield. I have always felt guilty of some disloyalty to you in wishing a connection which I am sure, in spite of your magnanimity, must be extremely distasteful. But if we should live in Athens, and if, some day, you also returned,

don't you think we could have a jolly life of it together, and that we three brothers, being such fine conductors of all visible and invisible electricity, could finally get about everything under our feet?

"I want to tell you again, Sky, that Barbara has not one drop of that old Fallon blood in her veins. She is like a pure lily grown out of the mud. As for Hallett, he will trouble us very little. Barbara says he has no liking for this country. His only desire is to get back to the gay life of Paris, interspersed with hours of luxurious recuperation in the Riviera. His distaste for business is a great disappointment to his father, but beyond indolence and the love for a life of pleasure, he is not such a thoroughly bad fellow. She thinks, as soon as matters are arranged, he will sell out his share in the Banner Mills, and go abroad for an indefinite period, never again, probably, to make this country his home. So you see how things are arranging themselves.

"The only remaining difficulty seems to be to convince Mr. Fallon that I am a star of the first magnitude in the financial heavens. To think of the humiliation of consenting to be a rival of Wickham Skinner! Do you see how I must love her?

"I have been ready to take passage as a

galley slave on any ship that can be put forth upon the ocean of mind. I have been dabbling in authorship again. I have dropped 'winged poetry,' and taken up 'pedestrian prose' as most reliable in my hard scramble. I have written a one-act play which has been well received, and has brought me in an April shower of shekels. It is said that an idle man is never called to any important work. I am afraid to neglect any opportunity, for fear of losing some possible crown.

"I remind myself every day of your splendid cheerfulness, for there is a contagion in it. Dear Gray preaches that 'hopelessness is a mark of the devil nature.' He says that cheerful men carry a patent of nobility—they are foregleams of that sun-crowned race that shall exist in the golden age when disease-germs shall be annihilated, when chemistry shall make spring lamb and oxtail soup out of dandelions and thistles, without so many intervening steps, and when lightnings and cyclones shall trot comfortably together in double harness.

"And I am sure you will be glad to know that Gray is simply and genuinely happy. How can he help it when all the world loves the unselfish, indefatigable worker? Some streets in Athens will never again be so dark. Whoever explores those dismal swamps, in future, will

find them lighted with a long line of incandescent good deeds. In my opinion, he is missing the quiet, unobtrusive sympathy of one of his chief coadjutors, who has lately gone back to Penfield. I have been giving him some good advice—think of the audacity! which, however, he has taken in good part. He will make a visit in Penfield before very long—the first in many years—but you and Dot need no longer walk softly before him. I am sure the dead past is buried, at last, and that Kitty's white hand, as I have so often foretold, will lead him firmly and forever from all sentiment over the grave.

"My best love to Dorothy. I used to think hair of burnished gold the most beautiful in the world, but it pales a little by the side of those dusky coils that have all the romance and mystery of a poet's night. But do not let her be unduly cast down. She is a very creditable person, in whom, as she knows, I have always taken a deep interest. I never can tell her how her words have gone sweeping through me ever since I was a boy in knickerbockers. Her voice has always been that of a trumpet, saying to my skulking lower self 'come up higher.' Her forte has been to make a feller wish he could be going to die, or take rhubarb, or rush into a burning building to take the baby out, and *she* look-

ing on. You may have felt something like it yourself.

"I must not forget to tell you that I met Carey to-day, more hollow and hectic than ever. He had your letter and has sent you the box of aluminium castings, but he seemed absolutely breathless and terrified to think you were getting ahead of him. He said he had made an important discovery himself, and wanted to have a long talk with you. So you see you must positively take a run over to Athens this week, and we can return together by Saturday night.

"Well, I have not been much of a fellow, Sky, but wait till I have some such inspiration in my life as you have had in yours. I may just be on the verge of a startling transition.

"'There are

"'Two points in the adventure of a diver:

"'One—when, a beggar, he prepares to plunge;

"'One—when, a prince, he rises with his pearl.

"'Festus, I plunge!'

"Did you ever notice that dimple in her chin, Schuyler?

"Yours,

"TOM."

"I half hoped the poor fellow might be getting over it," sighed Schuyler, a humourous smile, nevertheless, playing around his fine

mouth. "But this doesn't look much like it. Well, we must make the best of it. It is evidently a matter of life and death with Tom."

"She is a quaint, piquante little creature," said Dorothy; "one could easily love her. But it is a very trying rehearsal of the Montagues and Capulets."

"Well, our prejudices, at least, must not stand in the way of Tom's happiness. We must help him if we can. Tom did us a great service once, you remember, 'little brother,'" he said, smiling at the memory of that deep-laid plot. "We must not forget that is a debt to repay."

"And shall you go to Athens?" said Dorothy.

"Yes, for a few hours, perhaps. It is desirable on many accounts. Nothing would calm that poor Carey's mind like an interview. It is pathetic to think of the fright and disappointment hanging like two evil birds of prey over his long years of heroic toil. Besides, there are one or two little things that I need for the perfection of the model, that I prefer to select myself. Too great an explanation of my needs might betray my secret. But I shall be anxious about leaving you in these troubled times. One cannot tell what might happen. Should you be afraid?"

"Not at all," cried Dorothy promptly. "We are so far from the centre of the storm."

"I should only be gone one night at the most; perhaps, even, I might return on the midnight train. I'll tell you what I might do," he laughed. "I could bring up Pete, and that invaluable dog, Toni, to spend the night with you. There is nothing that evil-disposed persons hate worse than an irascible small dog about the house; and Toni, Pete assures me, is the best kind of a burglar alarm—he would bark if a fly walked across the floor at an improper hour."

"I should not object," laughed Dorothy, in her turn. "It would be hard to find better society than that of Pete and Toni, and I'm sure they would be all the protectors I should need."

And so the matter was settled.

CHAPTER X.

THE BURGLARY.

It had been a typical November day. From morning till night the rain had dripped hopelessly upon the leafless trees and sodden ground, and a plaintive wind had sobbed and sighed about the house. Dorothy had heaped the logs high in the wide fireplace, as the dreary night shut in, and warmly welcomed the advent of young Pete and Toni, who arrived just in time for supper.

Toni carried a well-polished bone in his mouth.

"It's as clean as a whistle," explained Pete apologetically, "but he likes to have something to wrastle with."

Dorothy smiled in delightful comprehension, and Pete made bold to slide into a chair. His shock of red hair was really a very cheerful thing on such a depressing night, and continually gave one the sensation that another lamp

had been lighted in the room, while the table manners of the sad, rigorously trained Toni were a source of equal delight to hostess and proud young master.

Pete had, at first, been very shy with the beautiful lady, and his round eyes were full of wonder at the exquisitely neat and shining table, spread with every luxury dear to a boy's heart. But after he had eaten his steaming oysters with accompaniment of unlimited muffins, followed by several slices of cake, and topping off with some hot-house grapes, and bon-bons, and all without his lovely hostess showing the least surprise or alarm, he was greatly reassured. The genial fire of the library as they came back to it completed the sense of delightful ease, and Pete's tongue, being loosened, soon ran in a steady stream.

"Is that the real old *Quo honor ducit?*" he asked first, in rather an awed tone, as his eyes fell on the old ancestor in wig and ruffles, hanging over the mantel.

Toni immediately gave a distressful whine, dropped his bone, and sat up in rigid fidelity beside it.

"Ain't he clever!" cried the delighted Pete. "He knows them words just as well as I do."

Several minutes had to be spent reassuring the poor creature that it was really vacation and

school hours were over for the present, before Dorothy could answer the question.

"Yes," she laughed, "that is one of them; not the very oldest, by any means."

"They always wears swell clo'se," said Pete thoughtfully, "them that goes that way, and always has money in their pockets. Dad says so."

"Not always, I'm afraid," said Dorothy.

"Yes, dad says so, and I'm going to stand up stiffer'n a stake. Money is a big thing, Mis' Page. I wish *honor* would *ducit* along a little faster on that road." He disconsolately fingered a lonely penny lying deep in his pocket. "Nancy Patten—she that lives up to Mis' Parsons'—feels just as I do. She says some people wants to be pretty, and some people wants to be witty, but as for her, give her money or give her death!"

"Why, I never suspected she was such a desperate character," said Dorothy, smiling.

"That's her size," replied Pete. "You see they takes all her money away from her, because there's such a big nestful of greedy young birds at home. Every one of their mouths wide open. And she don't see how she's goin' to stay any longer with Mis' Parsons either, for she's more cranky than ever now she's gittin' so scared about herself. She don't help in the cookin' no more, for she's so busy puttin' a little

glass ball into her mouth and writin' down somethin' on a piece of paper. And then she'll put it in Mr. Parsons' mouth and scratch away on the paper. Nancy has watched her many times all unbeknownst to her, and she says it looked to her like dealin's with the Evil One! She made bold to ask her about it one day, and," Pete's voice sank to a mysterious whisper, "she said right out she was a-seein' how hot she was! It gave Nancy such a turn that she ran right out of the house, and I don't believe she'd ever 'a' gone back if her father hadn't made her. But there hain't seemed no harm to come of it yet," he added doubtfully. "You ain't laughin', Mis' Page?"

"Oh, that is all right," said Dorothy, wiping her eyes. "I know all about that."

"Do you now?" said Pete, brightening. "It's bad enough to have such an old file of a father to be scared of. Old Patten, you know, hain't done nothin' but just swagger around for the last two months, and you wouldn't dast to touch him any more 'n a buzz-saw. But Nancy thinks from the way he's hinted around, lately, he's got something big in his eye."

"I do hope he has," said Dorothy, with an anxious look. "I do hope these questions will be settled very soon. Wouldn't it be cheerful to hear all the mills a-clatter again?"

The Burglary.

"There ain't nothin' very cheerful up to the mills, just now," said Pete, with a doubtful shake of the head. "Young Mr. Hallett and Mr. Skinner—Mr. Jabez Skinner—is battin' hard words at each other most o' the time, and old Mr. Fallon can't hold 'em down, no matter how hard he tries. They've made a new office in the mill-buildin', and I guess it's bothered 'em some, workin' over them half-burnt papers. There's always somethin' missin', and Mr. Skinner says he was sure there was papers took away before the fire, and he's accusin' Mr. Hallett of hidin' 'em. But to-day, when he was frettin', Mr. Hallett said somethin' as quick as lightnin', and I guess it scared him some. You'd 'a' laughed to see him," Pete rubbed his hands; "his chin dropped right down on to the floor. But there! dad says I mustn't tattle."

"Oh, no!" began Dorothy; but the stream was in too full flow for an immediate check.

"And when he can't get Mr. Hallett to badger, then he jumps on me," added Pete plaintively. "I was jest lookin' in the waste basket for some paper to make a lamplighter, when he took me by the collar, and shook me clean out of my coat. I wasn't to be snoopin' and tryin' to read any papers I found, he said; my business was to put 'em in the fire. If they were in the basket, or on the floor, or wherever I found 'em,

I was not to forget to burn 'em, or"—Pete finished in a somewhat awed tone of voice—"God wouldn't forgit to burn *me!*"

"Yes, it is always safer to do one's exact duty," said Dorothy, as gravely as she could, getting up to light a small candle, which Pete regretfully recognised as the advance-guard in the march which must shortly be taken to bed.

"A man of business needs all the rest he can get," she said with delightful flattery, as she led the way to the stairs.

Dorothy's room looked out over the lawn leading to the street. Pete and Toni were lodged at the other end of the hall in a small bedchamber over the library, with one broad window opening to the south.

"Shall I have my breakfast before I go in the morning?" asked Pete anxiously, as they were exchanging the final good-night.

"Without fail," said Dorothy. "I have ordered it early."

"Then it is only half over," sighed Pete, in great relief; and, almost before she could reach her room, he was stretched between the perfumed sheets, dropping away into charmed oblivion, with Toni stretched luxuriously on a rug at his side.

Dorothy took up a book, and read till the clock struck eleven. She had hoped that Schuy-

ler might return in the evening train, but it was growing too late for that. She removed her pretty gown, brushed out her fair hair and coiled it in a loose knot, and put on a soft, white flannel wrapper.

The wind had been rising for the last hour; it was dashing the rain spitefully against the window-panes; the old house was dreary and desolate, creaking and groaning with uncanny, mysterious noises. She was too restless to go to bed, and drawing the lamp to the head of the lounge, she settled herself in the cushions for another hour of reading. But the book was abstruse and dull, and presently, in the exhaustion of her straining attention, it slipped from her hand, and she, herself, fell into profoundest sleep.

Very suddenly she again came to consciousness. It seemed but a moment, but the old hall clock was solemnly striking one. She had risen to her feet, also, too confused at first, to know the reason why, but slowly becoming conscious of a vague terror that was filling her veins with ice. Had there been some unusual noise asserting itself above the din of the storm, something different from the groaning trees and clattering shutters, that had awakened her? She stood motionless, every faculty concentrated upon that of hearing. Could she be mistaken? No, she

pressed her hands upon her wildly beating heart; no, surely there was a dull, soft pad upon some floor below, a vibrant clink as of steel against marble or iron, a slow jar of the old house as if some heavy bit of furniture had been stealthily moved from its place.

She was scarcely awake; it might still be some unbearable nightmare. She looked around the pretty room trying to reassure herself; her eyes slowly drawn to the door, which she was glad to remember she had carefully bolted the night before. Were there steps outside creeping nearer, nearer? Was the knob surely turning with a little click? What stood just beyond those quaking panels?

For a moment all was blind, unreasoning terror. She was turning to stone. She tried to cry out, but not a word escaped.

"Mis' Page! Mis' Page!" came in a hoarse, muffled whisper through the keyhole, followed by the faint whimper of a dog.

The paralysing spell was broken. She hurriedly withdrew the bolt, and Pete, as white as chalk, tumbled in carrying Toni in his arms.

"I say, ain't you never goin' to wake up?" he cried excitedly. "There's somebody down in the libery!—somebody that hadn't ought to be there! Don't you hear 'em, Mis' Page?"

"Are you sure?" cried Dorothy, her limbs

trembling violently at this confirmation. She felt so helpless with the maids in a distant part of the house, and only this small man of war for defence.

"Sure!" cried Pete, hardly able to repress a scornful smile. "Why, they've been monkeyin' there more'n half an hour. Shut up, Toni!" he cried to the whimpering dog. "There's no use in his burstin' down, and gettin' choked maybe, till we've made up our minds what to do."

"I don't know what we can do, now that they are in," whispered Dorothy.

"That's so; we'd ought to have kept 'em out. It's all my fault, Mis' Page," cried Pete, in a burst of remorse. "Don't blame it on Toni. He give warnin' more'n an hour ago, but I thought it was rats, and I didn't want him to wake up the whole house, so I whipped him every time he spoke. But at last he got so crazy I had to git up, and oh, my! when I looked out of the window I could 'a' dropped. There was lights pourin' right out of the libery door," he panted, "and every little while the ugly shadow of one of 'em would come a-dancin' out on the grass. There's two of 'em sure, and maybe three. There, did you hear that?"

A dull report asserted itself only too distinctly, above all the clamour of the storm.

"Me and Toni'll go down if you want us to,"

said Pete, trying to conceal the chattering of his teeth. "I guess you are scared stiff!"

Dorothy was trying to pull herself together, and think what it was best to do. It might possibly be only mischievous boys, who could be easily frightened away. She remembered all Schuyler's delicate machinery upon the library table. Suppose any harm should come to that? Schuyler must not think her such a helpless coward.

"We will go partly down the stairs, Pete," she said, with white lips; "perhaps it isn't so bad as we think. If it should be, you must climb out of my window on to the piazza roof, and run for Mr. Beals."

Pete nodded, and they tiptoed out of the room just as Norah and Bridget, two dishevelled women with pallid faces, wrapped in hastily donned shawls, appeared in the door leading to the servants' rooms.

Dorothy held up a warning hand, and, then, all together they softly crept down to the first landing of the old-fashioned stairs, where it turned at a right angle. There was no need of going further. The door was partly open into the pretty room, so peaceful and friendly and safe just a few short hours before. Now everything was in the direst confusion. The light of a dark lantern was focussed upon the safe, which had been moved into the middle of the

floor. Two mysterious figures, in grewsome black masks, were kneeling beside it, and a third, similarly disguised, was ransacking the drawers of the library table.

It was but a moment, and the struggling Toni had leaped from Pete's hands and dashed among them with the most blood-curdling growls, while, with reckless bravery, he fastened upon the hand of one of the kneeling burglars.

There was a torrent of smothered imprecations, while a succession of piercing yelps testified to the force of the kick which had repaid poor Toni's fidelity.

The light was suddenly extinguished. There was a sound of stealthily hurrying feet, mingled with the faint clatter of horses' feet in the distance.

"They're running away!" cried Pete.

"No, they're coming after us!" cried Norah and Bridget, the frenzy of fear conquering their recent paralysis; and flying to Dorothy's room, they flung open the windows, screaming: "Help!" "Murder!" "Fire!" till exhausted nature could do no more.

The horses' hoofs drew nearer. Two or three gentlemen, returning from a late supper with a country friend, were passing in a carriage, and drew rein at the cry of such dire distress.

Dorothy, after vainly trying to quiet the mad-

dened women, had ventured to go down with a lamp in her trembling hands ; Pete, emboldened by her example, followed after, and running to answer the attack upon the hall door, admitted Mr. Fletcher, Dr. Hardy, and Hallett Fallon, full of anxiety and surprise.

It needed but a glance about the disordered room to tell the story.

"They're jest gone !" cried Pete, dancing up and down in his excitement. "If you chase 'em you'll ketch 'em. Come, Toni ! Sick 'em, Toni !"

Following Pete's lead two of the gentlemen rushed out into the shrubbery, leaving Hallett Fallon to reassure Dorothy, who, now that the danger was past, and help and protection were close at hand, was feeling the reaction of the strain. The room was growing black around her ; deathly pale, she was clinging to the table for support.

At the same time three men were coming rapidly up the road. They were Mr. Beals and Schuyler and Tom, who had been delayed by some slight accident to the train, and obliged to walk all the way from Penfield Center. Mr. Beals had taken this night train that he might discuss the ever new complications of his harassing affairs, and now Schuyler had insisted on his taking a bed with him, that he might not disturb

his family, who were not expecting him at such a late hour.

"It makes not the least difference with us, I assure you," he was saying. "If there is the least chance of my coming, Dorothy always sits up for me. There, did I not tell you?" he said gaily, as they neared the piazza: "the library is lighted up for a fête."

His heart swelled with a grateful thrill. How could he ever be thankful enough for the sweet, enveloping atmosphere of Dorothy's love?

"There will be welcome and a blazing fire after our soaking. A warm supper, too, if you like; certainly a cracker toasted at the coals, and a steaming cup of tea," he laughed, mounting the steps, and advancing hastily to the windows for a foretaste of the joy.

He started back with a quick exclamation. There, in the bright light, in the sight of them all, stood Hallett Fallon, and Dorothy, in her white wrapper, her pretty golden hair all unbound, was lying in his arms, her head upon his shoulder. A transforming look of wildest rage swept across Schuyler's face.

"Scoundrel!" he cried, flinging himself blindly forward.

Tom caught him as in a vice—the strength of the two brothers was very evenly matched.

"You are crazy, Sky!" he cried. "You are

all wrong! Don't you see something very unusual has happened? Don't you see she is faint? Don't you see," he dragged him back by main force, "he has laid her upon the sofa; he is bringing her water. Look, Sky, for Heaven's sake, look!"

It had been a painful shock. It was with a mighty effort he controlled himself to take in the details of the scene.

"Yes," he panted at last, his eye roving over the dire confusion. "I see, it is something unusual. I am a brute, but it is over. You can take off your handcuffs, Tom," his breath came heavily; "the savage is back in his cell—the iron bar is on the door."

"We can find no trace of them," broke in Mr. Fletcher, his voice coming pleasantly out of the gloom of the garden. "We have found some tools of the trade, dropped in the flight, but nothing, I am afraid, that can give any clue. Ah, Mr. Page, you have come just at the right time! There has been a pretty piece of work here; how successful you will have to judge."

The men all entered together. Dorothy, quite ashamed of her momentary weakness, was sitting up with a faint tinge of returning colour. Hercules had come, and what mattered anything else? Everything would now arrange itself. But when the story was to be told she was quite willing to yield the floor to the eager Pete, who

had become very brave and important since the reinforcements. He rehearsed the whole matter with delightful superiority from the moment when the sad, conscientious Toni had given his first brave bark to his whirlwind descent upon the foe who had fled before him.

"Toni got the drop on 'em!" he finished triumphantly. "You'd ought to 'a' seen 'em scamper before Toni!"

"Before Toni and the carriage-wheels perhaps," suggested Mr. Fletcher.

"Yes, indeed!" cried Dorothy. "They came at the most opportune time. I am very grateful to you, gentlemen."

Dorothy was never more beautiful than now in her lovely pallor, but Tom wished that Hallett Fallon would not look at her in such undisguised admiration. And yet how could anybody help it? He caught Mr. Beals looking uneasily at Schuyler. But there was no need.

"I also wish to thank you most heartily, gentlemen," he was saying with a courteous bow which, to Tom's relief and half wonder, equally included Hallett Fallon. "I shall not soon forget your prompt and brave assistance."

"You do not seem to have thought of your losses, Mr. Page," said Dr. Hardy, kneeling before the rifled safe. "Whatever might have been here, there seems to have been a clean sweep."

Schuyler turned quickly. In his strong emotion all thoughts of minor importance had been swept away.

"It is true!" he cried regretfully as he knelt by the doctor's side. "Your pretty diamonds, Dorothy—the Page diamonds—are all gone! and all the little family trinkets, most valuable from association. And the bag of gold pieces, too—some of them a hundred years old! My poor mother would have been so sorry. Quite a clean sweep," he said, rising.

"You must have a detective," said Mr. Fletcher. "I will telegraph immediately to Athens. I don't think it is the work of experts."

"No, clumsily done," said Schuyler. "They have drilled holes and exploded powder or dynamite. This was not a time-lock. I think an expert could have opened it with less trouble."

"There must have been more than one or two—at the very least three," said the sharp-eyed Mr. Fletcher, "for they have moved this heavy safe almost to the middle of the room. It took some muscle for that."

"I don't quite see why they should have gone so thoroughly through my desk," said Schuyler, frowning. "They have destroyed papers only valuable to myself, and have made me a vast amount of trouble."

"Yes," said Mr. Fletcher, stooping to gather

some fragments, "the floor is literally strewed with them."

Mr. Beals, who had been very quiet, wrapped in his own depressing thoughts, gloomily beckoned Hallett Fallon apart.

"Could it be possible," he whispered, "that the thief has been looking for something much more valuable to him than all the Page diamonds?"

"A suspicion has crossed my mind, I confess," said Hallett Fallon. "But no, it is too incredible. He would hardly descend to this. Besides, how could he possibly have known?"

"He has more eyes than a horse-fly," said Mr. Beals irritably.

"He needed one more then, this time," replied Hallett Fallon languidly. "It would be a good joke, though, if it should turn out that you got in just a length ahead of him. They are safe enough now; you can rest easy," he said, his hand straying to his breast pocket, although he did not reveal, even to Mr. Beals, what their hiding-place might be.

"I shall not feel easy until the trap is sprung," muttered Mr. Beals.

"Next week at the farthest, everything will be ready," responded Hallett Fallon.

Another exclamation from Schuyler, followed by cries of sympathy, recalled them to their

present surroundings. The beautiful, nearly finished model upon which Schuyler had lavished every leisure moment, and which had stood on the library table carefully covered with a silken cloth, was found twisted and broken, a hopeless wreck.

"It is pure malice—some personal spite that has done this," cried Tom indignantly.

"They were no ordinary burglars, I am sure," said Mr. Fletcher. "I shall do my best to bring them to justice."

Dorothy could scarcely restrain her tears. This was hardest of all. It meant long and trying delay, and, possibly, total loss of all his days and nights of toil. While the angel of invention was so troubling the scientific waters, somebody would be sure to step in before him. Schuyler, himself, had been so reckless in his generous justice that leaned almost to prodigality! She was not sure that he had not already left open an enlightening door into the innermost closet; and she knew that nobody was so remorseless—so utterly without conscience—as the mental burglar.

But Schuyler was rallying already, with his sweet, undaunted bravery.

"Time will mend all," he said. "It might so easily have been worse, dearest, prettiest Dot," he added, in a whisper of intense gratitude that nobody heard but herself.

The frightened maids had, by this time, sufficiently recovered to carry out Dorothy's brief orders, and hot bouillon, sandwiches, and other hastily improvised refreshments were announced from the dining-room. Thither they all repaired with the exception of Pete and Toni, who, curled up on the rug before the fire, were already sound asleep.

The excited discussion suffered small check, however. Different theories were constantly advanced. Schuyler might have enemies among the mill hands ; indeed, he assented that this was more than probable. But through all the ebb and flow Tom noticed, with a growing hero worship, Schuyler's calm self-possession, and what he especially recognised as his stern verdict upon himself. If there were some pardonable stiffness, now and then, there certainly could no fault be found with the never-failing attention and highbred courtesy with which all Hallett Fallon's wants were supplied.

CHAPTER XI.

THE STORM CENTRE.

A WEEK had passed of unusual severity for that time of the year. The first snow of the winter had fallen, and in the houses of the idle mill hands, pitifully short of fuel, illness from privation and hunger had begun to add its load to a burden already too hard to bear. The charities of the town were taxed to the utmost, and still failed to meet the constantly increasing demand.

Schuyler quietly, without observation, as had long been his wont, went home daily by the way of the dingiest streets, the urchins of the gutter hailing his tall form with shouts of delighted recognition, and guiding him infallibly to the houses where misery crushed with most unrelenting hand. A quiet stream of comfort was continually flowing in, unheralded and unsuspected outside the squalid precincts. There would be a load of coal for Grandfather Jones'

failing fire, a physician sent to the baby dying with sudden croup, a bit of money pressed into a thin hand that had searched vainly in a cupboard whose last resources had been drained hours before.

In the midst of it all, Schuyler was surprised by an improvident, irresponsible light-heartedness that continually asserted itself the moment the worst of the pressure was removed. A woman barely rescued from starvation by his untiring hand, he found singing gaily the next day, in the midst of her bare-footed brood, as if she had not a care in the world. For the moment she was warmed and fed ; that there was no provision for the morrow was not a problem demanding any solution of hers. In another house a man was fiddling by the side of a wife in the last stages of a fatal disease, calmly ready to discuss, in her presence, the symptoms of failure and the probable method of her taking off.

Schuyler looked upon it with growing wonder, scarcely knowing whether to be thankful for this merciful apathy and bluntness of feeling, or to recognise that much must be done for the weak brother in the rear, beyond the mere ministering to his bodily wants.

It was with a feeling of acute relief, however, that, after he had gone his rounds, he shook

himself free from misery, as it were, and hurried with light, elastic step to home and Dorothy. The contrast was exquisite beyond words to express. The picture would hang alluringly before him, as he strode through the shadows of the winter's evening. The square, low-ceilinged room, with its atmosphere of pictures and books; the open fire upon the broad hearth, with its noble, smouldering logs ; the glimpse through a half-drawn portière of the room beyond ; the spotless table, the shining tea-service, the long-stemmed vase with two or three crimson roses.

But, best of all, Dorothy, in the soft, white gown he loved to have her wear when the day was over, her golden hair swept back from her pure, pale face. Everything was dear to him—her delicate round wrists and dainty hands, the pretty slippers on her little feet, everything so exquisitely neat and pure. How it appealed to him after the grimy ugliness of the scenes he had left!

There came an evening, destined to be long held in wistful memory,—as we remember the faces of the dead,—when Schuyler felt this with an intensity that was almost pain.

"Is it wrong to be so happy, Dorothy?" he said. He had pushed up the library table in front of the fire, and was patiently working to restore the ruined model, while she sat opposite,

a pretty piece of feminine work in her graceful hands.

"I was never more absolutely and gratefully contented in all my life," he continued. "It is strange to be so pampered when so many of my fellow-creatures, both high and low, are being tossed and tortured on the waves of passion and self-interest. They say in every cyclonic storm there is one absolutely quiet place, and that is the exact centre. I think I must be there. I have been free, even, from that apprehension that has so often shadowed me. We must be selfishly sitting in the exact centre of the storm; but I am exquisitely happy, 'little brother.'"

"Cousin Delia would say that was a very bad omen," laughed Dorothy lightly. "I shall not encourage you in any such delusion. I am sure most people would think you were not entirely out of the track of the storm a week ago to-night."

"True!" said Schuyler ruefully. "And clumsy as Fletcher thought the burglary, his fine detectives have not yet struck the scent. There is absolutely no clue, in my opinion. I have tried to convince Mr. Beals that it is positively disgraceful to suspect a person without a shadow of proof. Well, I suppose the gold is all melted by this time, and your pretty diamonds picked from their settings, and there will be plenty of clever

'fences' to dispose of them a long way from here. Aren't you sorry never once to have worn the pretty *rivière?*" he said regretfully.

"For your sake, yes," she said. "But they have left me the only diamond for which I ever cared"—she held up the finger upon which sparkled the ring of so many memories. "It used to talk to me," she said with glistening eyes. "It does now."

He caught the small hand and pressed it to his lips.

"I cannot bear to think of the uncertainties of those dark days," he said. "May nothing again happen to separate you and me. I am not sure that I could bear it. There, will you hold those screws, 'little brother'? Put down those silken threads, dear, and help make the shell for my dynamite bomb—one of Heaven's dynamite bombs, Dot—you shall see, when it explodes, with what comfort, pleasure, and expanded life it will fly into a thousand homes. It will be so much easier for people to be better when they begin to be happier."

Dorothy was only too content when she was allowed this partnership, and for more than an hour they worked in the perfection of comradeship, scarcely a word being spoken.

"Schuyler," she said at last, as she saw each little rivet and plate again falling into beautiful

harmony, "do not pioneers—the explorers of any new country—proverbially encounter no end of dangers and hardships?"

"Oh, yes, a successful pioneer must be a man of exceptional bravery—a man of steel."

"I have a strange uneasiness about you, sometimes," she said softly. "You seem to me like a man always pressing forward into a land where no other foot has trodden. You are different from most of the men about you, not in mind only, but in character. Don't you suppose I know? You half frighten me, sometimes; you seem to me under the stress of a mighty, rushing wind—I can express it in no other way—that comes from no earthly country. I don't know but I shall be forced to believe in the land of the 'New Dimension,' and that you are one of its first pioneers."

"With all my heart," laughed Schuyler. "We certainly must have claims that we don't suspect in many regions not patent to the senses. Our intangible food—air, heat, light, electricity—is just as important to our well-being as the more solid. Already we are all living largely in the invisible. But you do not expect me to fight savages and wild beasts in that country?"

"Not quite, but there might be equally dangerous unknown forces that should not be handled carelessly till one is naturalised, at least.

But perhaps I am more afraid of the world behind you—the envy and criticism and misunderstanding. Oh, there is always some ambush! Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown of the pioneer's wife."

"Let us look into the jungles when we come to them, dear," said Schuyler. "And now, shall we have an hour of Shakspere before we go to bed?"

The next morning, as Schuyler reached Penfield Center, he noticed an unusual stir in the streets. Groups of men with scowling faces were hurrying to and fro, and he saw with anxiety that some were carrying heavy sticks. He was not sure but more deadly weapons were concealed beneath the ragged coats. Mr. Beals, more hollow-eyed than ever, gave him a hasty shake of the hand.

"We are expecting the new men to-day," he said nervously, "but these rascals are tearing up the rails, and cutting the telegraph wires. We are going to have no end of trouble before night. The governor has promised us the militia, but I don't know when they will arrive. All communication cut off since early this morning. The men are perfect brutes—ready for anything. They have threatened to burn the mills. Come up that way when you have time," he finished hurriedly. "I think you have some influence with the men. Help us if you can."

Schuyler gave a hearty assent, and after arranging some necessary business at the dynamo works, he left everything in charge of Mr. Manning and started for the scene of interest.

A general air of alarmed expectancy was on every face. Several of the more timid shopkeepers had already closed their stores. A steady stream of boys and idlers was converging to the Banner Mills. The roar of voices, like angry surf upon the shore, could be heard some blocks away. It was increasingly difficult, as Schuyler advanced, to force his way through the groups of excited men.

"There's no market for your soft words this morning," exclaimed Patten, as he passed him. "The boys have got 'em all in there like rats in a hole. They've got to come to reason, now, I guess, or it'll be the worse for 'em."

Schuyler followed the direction of his pointing finger, and saw, brokenly, between the waving arms, Mr. Fallon, the elder, with Mr. Beals and clerk Skinner upon the wide steps of the mill, surrounded on every side by hooting, threatening figures. Some of the men were contending with two or three policemen, in discouraging minority, for possession of the door just behind their employers, evidently intending to cut off all retreat in that direction. Young Hallett Fallon stood on a lower step—calm, well dressed as

usual—courageously trying to make a conciliatory speech, which was almost entirely lost in the roar of the crowd.

"They're in a bad fix, Mr. Schuyler," said Lame Joe, panting at his side; "and the old man and Skinner hain't got a friend in the crowd."

"Joe, I'm ashamed of you!" exploded Schuyler. "I am their friend. You are their friend. Everybody with a spark of decency in him is the friend of men in such straits as that. Follow me as close as you can."

He wedged himself into the living mass, but Joe was unable to keep up with him. On he went, imploring, commanding, counselling coolness, patience, the keeping of the law. It was but a drop of oil on an ocean in commotion. Once, through a momentary rift, he saw that Mr. Fallon and Mr. Beals were being drawn into safety within the doors. Skinner, too, must have been with them, for he had disappeared. Only that one lone figure was left slowly retreating up the steps.

Almost at the front he encountered Tom, bent on the same hopeless errand with himself; and then to his dismay and consternation, he suddenly descried young Pete, waving a pistol in his reckless hand, his fiery, capless head bobbing like a gaily painted buoy in the sea.

"Take that from the young scamp!" he cried sternly, to Tom, nearer than himself. "The danger of it!"

Almost as he spoke, a sharp report cleft the air, and the graceful figure on the steps of the mill swayed to and fro, threw up its hands, and fell heavily to the ground.

Schuyler looked around and saw Tom holding the pistol high in one hand, dazed with excitement and horror.

"Was it an accident?" he cried, struggling to his side.

Tom did not hear in the hoarse roar that, after a moment of blank silence, was arising on every side.

"Hallett Fallon is shot!" "Through the head!" "They have murdered Hallett Fallon!"

"Give it to me, Tom!" panted Schuyler, wresting the pistol from his hand. Only one thought was dominant in his brain—whatever happened, that accusing thing must not be found with Tom.

Then he flung himself forward, cleaving a way by his great strength, and knelt by the dying man, tenderly lifting his head upon his arm. Yes, it was horribly, fatally true! One short moment ago in all the pride and vigour of his young manhood, and now, Hallett Fallon,

ghastly pale, with quivering lips, was stretched dying with a bullet through his brain!

Only once he opened his eyes, already dim and glazed, and looked earnestly upon Schuyler. The intervening days became as nothing; the old school friend, the merry care-free combatant at bat and ball lay before him.

"What is it, my dear fellow?" cried Schuyler, in a choked voice. "There is nothing that I would not do for you."

"I believe it," he said faintly, still with that earnest look as if, in the candour of death, he would have said more.

But the gaze grew stony, the lips stiffened, there was a slight shiver through the light figure, and all was still.

The mob, still wildly excited, was opening a way for Dr. Hardy and Charley Beals. Alas, no need to take the limp hand or feel the voiceless heart!

"It is all over," said Dr. Hardy solemnly.

Mr. Skinner, too, had arrived, and, with a green pallor that was almost more ghastly than death, was kneeling by his side.

"It is a frightful murder!" he gasped. "It will kill his father. You have been very kind, gentlemen. Now, if you will kindly step aside, I will take charge of him. Some of the men will carry him into the mill, until I can find a fit conveyance."

"You are very unfit, yourself," said Dr. Hardy. "You are on the verge of a chill. Here, take some brandy."

Skinner staggered to his feet, somewhat revived.

"It has taken me very suddenly, gentlemen," he said, looking around piteously. "I was talking with him not fifteen minutes ago."

"I did not know the fellow had so much heart," said Dr. Hardy to Charley Beals. "Well, every man has got a soft spot somewhere. I wonder who could have done the deed? Poor fellow! I didn't know he had an enemy anywhere."

Schuyler still held the head grown so heavy upon his arm, watching the weak, irresolute lips settle into the dignity of death. His heart, tender as a woman's, was grieved and torn that it had ever cherished one bitter thought against the man now lying in such sacred helplessness.

There had been a flash of better understanding at the last, perhaps—those whispered words would always be very dear to him.

The ranks again suddenly opened to let in a small band of police. The chief went up to Schuyler, and said politely enough:

"I shall have to trouble you for that pistol, Mr. Page."

Schuyler started, everybody stared. He had

forgotten all about it, but all the time it had been tightly clenched in his firm right hand.

"How did you come by it?" said Dr. Hardy disapprovingly, as relinquishing the body to the men who had come with a shutter, he slowly rose to his feet. "I thought you did not approve of carrying fire-arms."

Schuyler felt himself flushing with so many curious eyes upon him, but he answered coolly and truthfully enough:

"Young Pete was carrying it. Nobody could leave it in the hands of such a reckless child."

"And so you took it from him?" said Dr. Hardy. "Well, better you than another. It might have been awkward if found with a man of less character. The law will be vigilant in a case of such importance as this. There will be short shrift for the man who did the deed."

Schuyler assented with drooping head. He felt strangely fatigued and depressed. He must find Tom, he must get home, he must have quiet to think it all over.

It was much easier now, to push one's way through the crowd. The great tragedy of death had awed them, and laid a chill hand on their passions. The men were gathered in small groups earnestly discussing the affair in all its smallest details. Who had done it? Was it a judgment

on the old screw—Fallon? Would he be so anxious that other men's children should starve now that his only son would never ask for anything more?

Schuyler thought that some of them looked strangely at him as he passed, and then, for the first time, realised that his clothing was in great disorder, and that where the head of the victim had lain it was stained, nay saturated, with blood. He hastened his steps. He must steal in at the back door. He hoped Dorothy might be at the Park; this was not a sight for her gentle eyes. But no, as he reached the steps, she was just coming out in her pretty fur-bordered walking dress, so unconscious, so joyous, the light of past happiness in her eyes, and already looking forward to another perfect evening drawing near. She gave a quick cry of dismay as she drew him within the door.

"You are hurt! Tell me, is it serious? Oh, how did it happen? Have you been shot? Speak quick, Schuyler, I cannot bear it!"

There was no help for it. Schuyler told her the dreadful tragedy as simply and tenderly as possible.

She was very white. "Poor fellow! Poor Hallett Fallon!" she cried. "But oh, thank God, it was not you, Schuyler! Oh, thank God! Who did it?" she added, after a minute.

"Who could have done such an infamous thing? Do you know, Schuyler?"

Schuyler flushed and paled. "No," he stammered. "It was accidental, I think." He tried to smile reassuringly into her horror-strained eyes. "A stray shot that might have struck anybody."

"And you were spared!" she cried again. "Oh, thank God!"

She dragged him to the stairs; she was greatly excited. "Now you must get off all those horrible things. I am so glad you held his poor head; but I cannot bear the sight. Yes, take them off! hurry and take them off!"

She brought clean linen to his room, and aided him in every way with her nervous, trembling fingers. Then, with an impulsive haste she did not stop to understand, she caught up the crimson shirt upon the floor. No other eyes should see it—the frightful thing that could never again be white—and she ran rapidly down to the library, and threw it upon the blazing fire. On second thought the waistcoat followed suit, and Schuyler had some difficulty in rescuing his coat.

"It was almost new, 'little brother,'" he said, remonstrating. "It might warm some shivering back, even if I can never be allowed to wear it again."

"You might give it to Joe," she said. "There, I shall wrap it up immediately, that there may be no mistake;" and she made up the bundle, tied it securely, and thrust it away in a dark, seldom used closet under the stairway.

"Now you are all right again, my own perfect hero!" she said, taking him in her arms and kissing him passionately. "It was so shocking to see you covered with——" She shuddered violently. "It made it so frightfully real! It almost seemed as if—— O Schuyler, how I shall pity the wife of the man that did the deed! We will do everything we can for all the unhappy people, won't we, Sky? God has been so very good to us."

As she spoke there was the sound of wheels rattling noisily up to the gate, and then the tramp of more than one pair of feet. Schuyler looked from the window.

"It is Beals and Manning, and one or two others, come to talk it over, I suppose. I will go to the door," he said, putting her gently from him. "Will you see to a cup of something hot? A little hospitality would not be amiss this bitter day."

Dorothy went hurriedly, only too glad of the diversion of a sweet, commonplace duty. Schuyler opened the door to find himself confronted by the sheriff, a square-shouldered policeman,

and the troubled faces of Mr. Manning, Mr. Beals and Dr. Hardy.

"Come in, gentlemen," he said, with ready courtesy. "You have come to talk over this miserable affair? Come in to the library fire. Is there anything I can do for you? Have you the least clue to the guilty man?"

The sheriff's face appeared to be very red with the cold; he coughed in an embarrassed way.

"Schuyler," began Mr. Beals hurriedly, "everything is in a wretched muddle—a heap of blunders, I am sure. Don't get excited. It is sure to work out all right. You see the town is in wild excitement over this, and some victim must be found temporarily to appease it. If you will kindly answer a few questions, perhaps there are some points upon which the people's minds could be set at rest at once."

Schuyler looked from one to the other like one seeking a lantern in a blinding fog. The sheriff shook his head doubtfully, and then suddenly found tongue:

"Yes—er—Mr. Page, would you be so good as to explain how you came by that pistol, and how one chamber happens to be found empty?"

Schuyler started visibly, a distressing memory surging back in his brain. It was true, then! The pistol had been fired. Alas, poor Tom! and the victim Barbara's brother! What a cruel

irony of fate! Of course it was an accident—a senseless, maddening accident! but what if that should be difficult to prove? What would come after? In any event would not this accusation be a stigma which would blight Tom's fair young life, and forever stand a forbidding ghost between him and his much-loved Barbara? One straw only floated within his mental reach.

"The bullet," he said—"has that been found? It might never have come from this pistol—it might be a different size."

"The ball has been extracted," said Dr. Hardy anxiously.

"And it exactly fits the chamber," said the sheriff, with official sternness.

Schuyler looked from one to the other. Every eye was upon him; they burst into his soul like flames of fire.

"But it need not necessarily have come from your pistol, Page, for all that," said Mr. Manning, with an effort at a laugh to relieve the tenseness of the situation. "There is more than one pistol of 32-calibre in the world. You never would have fired that shot."

"Of course not! What absurdity!" cried Mr. Beals excitedly.

"How did you happen to have it?" insisted the sheriff. "Was it your pistol? Where did you get it?"

The air grew red about him. One thought only hammered on his throbbing brain. It was simply impossible for him to accuse Tom! Tom was as absolutely innocent, in all intention, as he himself; perhaps he, Schuyler, was even the more responsible of the two, since Tom was acting under his orders. If he were most unhappily careless, still, at all hazards, he must protect Tom. Probably the boy might not even know in his excitement that he had done it; he almost hoped he would not. His heart softened with a great tenderness for the innocent, unfortunate fellow. Had he not promised to stand by him even unto death? Yes, there was no other way. Unless Tom should speak, his lips were sealed. It would be cruel to shift this terrible burden upon Tom. Perhaps he was making too much of it, perhaps the plea of accident might be accepted, in which case it would still be much better that he should carry the scars of the conflict than Tom. But he must answer the question.

"It was taken from a boy in the crowd," he said, with some constraint, at last.

"After the shot was fired?"

"No, before."

"Was the pistol discharged in your hands, then?"

"It certainly was not."

"And you are sure the boy did not do it?"

"Absolutely sure."

"Very extraordinary!" said the sheriff. "I am afraid the responsibility must remain with you, sir."

"As you like," said Schuyler, his mouth set in a firm, obstinate line.

Mr. Beals and Mr. Manning exchanged looks of anxiety. Quickly as he had answered, there had been a noticeable pause after the sheriff's first question. Did he appreciate the gravity of the situation, and realise how the most careless word might have an exaggerated importance, and be taken as "confirmation strong as Holy Writ"?

The sheriff, himself, had always been a great friend of Schuyler, and had as thorough respect and liking for him as for any man in the place, but now professional interest was awakening, and all social amenities were put aside. Schuyler was merely the hare running wildly to covert, and he the unrelenting pointer directing the hunt.

"You have changed your coat, I take it, since you came home," he said, looking critically at Schuyler's faultlessly neat attire.

Schuyler bowed coldly; it seemed a vulgar piece of impertinence.

"I think I must ask you for the clothes you have taken off," he said significantly.

Schuyler coloured hotly.

"I am sure that ought to be quite unnecessary," said Mr. Manning, with some indignation. "Holding Mr. Fallon's head in the way he did, there could be, of course, but one result."

"They might be important exhibits," persisted the sheriff doggedly. "I guess it's my duty to take them."

"Certainly, certainly; there can be no objection," cried Schuyler proudly. "I will get them."

He looked about, then suddenly paused, a slight pallor coming into his cheek. What strange coils were tightening about him! How unfortunate that Dorothy—he turned involuntarily to the fire, and every eye turned with him. The young policeman, with keen, dark eyes, advanced, took the poker standing by the side of the hearth and raked out a fragment of cuff still held together by a gold stud. Farther researches were rewarded with two or three warped and discoloured metal buttons. The whole party watched silently as if a spell were upon them.

"I think I won't ask you to produce the clothes, Mr. Page," said the sheriff, with an exasperating smile of professional triumph.

"How could you do it, Page?" said Mr. Man-

ning, in an impatient aside. "Confoundedly awkward! Most unfortunate."

Schuyler gave a swift glance at the dining-room door. If only it could be kept from Dorothy! forever kept from the poor frightened "little brother," who would have been glad to lay down life if necessary for his sake.

"It was done on the impulse of the moment," he said with calm dignity, all traces of his temporary disturbance held in rigid control. "Surely, a not unnatural fate for garments that would always be associated with such a tragedy. I am sorry to disappoint you," he said, turning to the sheriff. "I think the coat remains—perhaps in a hall closet——"

The man went out on a signal from the sheriff.

Schuyler stood with his tall form drawn up to its utmost height, his eyes turning with a proud interrogation from one friend to another.

"No, Page, no!" cried Mr. Manning sharply, in answer to the mute question. "Not for a moment; not for the fraction of a second! Nobody in his senses could believe it. We shall all stand by you. I hope it will only be the inconvenience of a few hours. But there are some mighty awkward things. I wish you would speak out as frankly as you can."

The man had returned with the stained bundle in his hands. He had found it in the

darkest corner of the closet, he said, under much other rubbish. Alas, poor loving Dorothy!

"Have you any explanation to make of this evident effort at concealment?" asked the sheriff.

"None whatever," said Schuyler, with a faint smile. "I believe I myself disclosed the place where the coat might be found."

"Where you were sure it would be discovered," said the sheriff quickly.

"For shame!" said Dr. Hardy. "I protest against such an insult. Do not treat a man as a criminal upon such shadow of proof as this."

The sheriff made a half apology. "You forget, gentlemen," he said, "that there is a witness ready to swear he saw him do the deed."

"Impossible!" cried Schuyler. "Who is he?"

"The illiterate boughten tool of a man whom we have every reason to distrust," cried Mr. Beals, with sudden fire. "I shall have something to contribute on that head."

"All in good time," said the sheriff. "Have you anything more to say, Mr. Page?"

"Absolutely nothing," said Schuyler.

"Perhaps you see, then, Mr. Page, that your presence might be somewhat important at the inquest to be held about an hour from now." He looked at his watch. "I think we shall have to ask you to go with us."

"A mere form," cried Mr. Manning, with an air of confidence greater than he felt. "We'll pull you through easy enough. Confoundedly awkward, though!" he repeated in a vexed aside to Dr. Hardy.

The portière was suddenly drawn aside, and a servant announced that luncheon was served. Dorothy, in her dainty attire, was standing in the doorway draped by the heavy folds, a faintly tinted, exquisite statue. The sheriff started back with a confused apology, and all the gentlemen bowed low to hide their embarrassment.

"It would give us great pleasure, gentlemen——" she began, in her sweet, low voice.

Schuyler looked toward her, in one swift glance taking in every loved detail. He particularly noticed how slender and white the hand looked holding back the dark portière, he always remembered exactly how the lace fell about the soft, rounded wrist. It was with more difficulty he raised his eyes to her face.

"We cannot stay, Dorothy," he said hurriedly. "There is important business—most important—that obliges us all to return immediately to Penfield Center. Yes," he repeated—it was hard to meet the appeal of her disappointed eyes—"I must go with them a little while, perhaps not very long."

"You will of course return to-night?" she said, in anxious surprise.

"Oh, of course," said Mr. Beals, edging to the door. "But if anything should happen to detain him," he added nervously, "I will send Kitty up to spend the night with you."

Schuyler gave him a grateful look, and with many profound bows and apologies they all hurried out to the carriages.

Poor Dorothy looked wistfully after them. They seemed in great haste to escape, she thought. How tall Schuyler was! What a king he looked among them all! No wonder everybody came for his counsel and help. If they only could have left him to her till to-morrow—till these first trying hours were past! Schuyler himself needed the rest, but he never gave a thought to his own pleasure, if there was a chance to help or comfort the least of God's creatures.

CHAPTER XII.

WHO DID THE DEED?

On the morning after the murder Penfield awoke to the most profound sensation it had ever experienced in all the years of its long prosily respectable existence as one of the oldest towns in the State. From an early hour newsboys were darting to and fro, with shrill cries of, "Full accounts of the murder of Hallett Fallon!" "Verdict of the coroner's jury!" "Arrest of Schuyler Page!" "Prostration of the father of the victim!"

All business was temporarily suspended and knots of men were gathered on every corner, many faces eloquent with incredulity and regret, but some, perhaps, shining with that pleasurable excitement which cynics aver man is only too apt to feel over the reverses and calamities of his fellows. Women, also, made errands to each others' houses, and hours were spent in discussions and wonderments as fresh at the end as at

the beginning. The high social position of all the parties lent an especial flavour to the tragedy, and the exalted character and popularity of the man lying in the shadow of Penfield jail provoked many a comment of pity and dismay.

In the office of young Dr. Charley Beals a particularly excited discussion was going on, which, at times, waxed so vehement that he was forced to raise a warning hand. In the room beyond Tom Page had been lying for the last twenty-four hours, wrapped in heavy unconsciousness. As he was struggling to join Schuyler in the confusion and mêlée of the day before, the blow of a heavy bludgeon—whether by intention or accident, none could tell—had felled him to the ground, and nearly succeeded in breaking his skull in the bargain.

"I had him brought right in here. Plenty of room," explained Dr. Charley to Sam Peters and Mr. Manning. "He is doing well, but he might come to consciousness any moment, and I don't want the thing sprung on him. He'll take it hard, poor old fellow!"

"The whole thing is a perfect outrage!" cried Mr. Manning. "I thought he would be dismissed in an hour. There is something I cannot understand—one would almost say an element of vindictiveness in the verdict."

"The most stupid jury I ever knew," said

Sam Peters, the tears in his honest eyes. "One could cheerfully hang them all. Their verdict would have disgraced an idiot asylum."

"Who were on the jury?" asked Mr. Beals. "I heard, but the names have escaped me."

"Prime minister Skinner, first and foremost," cried Mr. Fletcher, "and the rest, I should judge, more or less tools of Mr. Fallon. It was all done with most indecent haste. I did not get there till all was over."

"But what, after all, could you do with such testimony?" said Mr. Beals dejectedly. "Young Wickham Skinner swore that he saw him raise and point the pistol. He was trying to reach him, he says, when he heard the report, and all was over."

"Did he see him fire?" asked Mr. Fletcher.

"No, but that brute Patten supplied that evidence," said Sam Peters. "He swore positively that he saw him do the deed. I wonder what he gets for it."

"And what does young Wickham get for it?" asked Mr. Manning.

"Oh, everything!" cried Dr. Charley bitterly. "It is a great chance for him. He shows his loyalty to the Fallons, and, at the same moment, puts a formidable rival entirely out of the game."

"May God forgive him, if that is so!" said

Dr. Peters solemnly, raising his white head from the paper crushed in his hand.

"It is a lie!" cried Mr. Fletcher, bringing down his fist with a crash upon the table, "a monstrous lie! It is, speaking mathematically, a lie raised to its second power—the square of a lie! Nothing could be more incongruous and incredible than such a deed coming into the record of that honourable life. Why, look at it, what could possibly have been his motive?"

"That will probably be developed on the trial, gentlemen," said a deep voice in the rear.

Every eye turned and saw that the little company had been enlarged by the addition of Mr. Stratton, Mr. Fallon's especial man of business from Athens, a lynx-eyed lawyer with bushy eyebrows meeting over his eagle nose. He had come on in the night train, and, after a long consultation with the unhappy father, was looking for an interview with Mr. Fletcher.

"There will be some other things developed on that trial," cried Charley Beals, his voice trembling with indignation. "Unless you can change the laws of the universe, that shot never came from Mr. Page's direction. It entered behind Hallett Fallon's ear. That cowardly bullet came from somewhere in the rear."

"Very unimportant testimony," said Mr.

Stratton coldly, "when you remember that in that pushing, swaying crowd all about Mr. Fallon, nobody could maintain one position half a minute at a time. As Mr. Skinner has told me, he was constantly turning from right to left, in his impassioned appeal to the men. It would be impossible to swear to his exact position when the shot was fired. Do you know, gentlemen, of any personal enemy whom this unfortunate young man may have had?"

"None whatever," came in unanimous chorus, almost as the voice of one man.

"Ah, indeed!" said Mr. Stratton. "I have been otherwise informed. Was there no old feud descending from father to son, intensified, perhaps, by some still more personal and delicate discordance with the son? Could there not be a moment, in an impulsive nature, when passion got the better of the normal self-control? when the wild beast that lies crouched in the underground dungeons of every strong nature leaped forth unmanageably to his prey?"

Mr. Beals and Mr. Manning exchanged a quick look which did not escape the watchful lawyer.

"Ah, you catch my meaning!" he said, with a wily smile, making a quick entry in his notebook. "We may have occasion to call on you in the future, when, of course, at whatever cost, you will lend all your aid to furthering the stern

demands of justice. Now, Mr. Fletcher, if you have the leisure——"

"Yes, we shall all give our best powers to that end," cried Mr. Fletcher, rising to accompany him, "and we expect only one result—the triumphant vindication of our friend, of everybody's friend, Mr. Schuyler Page!"

A faint cheer arose at the words, only restrained by Dr. Charley's uplifted hand. Nevertheless it was a somewhat subdued party that sat speechless for some minutes after the two men had gone out. Mr. Beals despondently broke the silence.

"It is much to be regretted," he said, "that Schuyler was so quick-tempered. It will weigh against him. I, myself, have seen him fairly transformed. Could it be possible that——"

"No, father," cried Dr. Charley hastily; "don't bring such a thought to the birth."

"Yes, it is a monstrosity!" cried Dr. Peters, bringing down his cane. "You know him well, Beals. Tell me, honestly, where can you find such another lover of his fellow-men? Who was it held that dying head with all the tenderness of a brother?"

"He had two natures," stammered Mr. Beals apologetically. "His remorse always followed quick on the heels of his passion; it was sure as the peal after a shaft of lightning. But I meant

no harm," he said, waving his hand to the disapproving faces. "In my heart of hearts, I fairly love the man. We have had some differences, but I shall give him as faithful service as the best of you. I only saw how some facts might work against him."

Mr. Beals wiped his eyes, and Dr. Peters loudly blew his nose.

"I do not see," said Mr. Manning, in a tone of greater cheerfulness, "why we should all give way to such womanish despair. It is demoralising. Things may look a little more complicated than we thought at first, but I cannot imagine any other than one conclusion. That man will come out of the fire without one hair of his head being singed. It is only unbearable, for the moment, that he should be subjected to such humiliation—for personal restraint, even if undeserved, is always a humiliation. My blood boils when I think of that man in a cell."

"He went like a king," cried Sam Peters. "Did you see the crowd at the door of the jail? There were more than a hundred men pressing up to shake hands with him. I never saw such a sight. And he just as calm and cheerful as ever, like a king taking leave of his subjects. You ought to have seen the way he took off his hat and bowed to them all as he went in the door."

"Like anything rather than a criminal," said Mr. Manning warmly. "A grand eagle taken in a trap."

"I saw the sheriff, this morning," said Mr. Beals. "He has given him the best accommodations in his power—a clean room, a comfortable bed, and a chair. But that horrible, grated window and clanging door! He has stronger nerves than I, if they do not wear upon him."

"What a life he has had!" said Dr. Charley. "It was only ten or eleven years ago, just about this time, that he had that frightful experience in the mine."

"I wonder which trap he considers the worst?" said Sam Peters. "Well, it *is* strange, as you say, how some men are born to events, while others, from cradle to grave, lead such humdrum bread-and-butter lives. But it goes all through nature, if you think of it," he added, with a touch of his father's oratory; "some drops of water may live in the heart of a rose, and some must go over Niagara."

Dr. Peters slowly rose. "I believe it is a true saying," he said gently, that 'great souls attract sorrows as mountains do storms.'"

"Are you going to your mountain, father?" said Sam Peters. "Tell him we are all gathered around the base. It might be a comfort to him."

"I expect him to comfort me," replied the old man.

"Yes," cried Charley Beals; "he is that kind of a mountain, eternal sunshine can't help settling on his head."

But the smile of the momentary pleasantry faded with Dr. Peters' departing steps.

"After all," said Sam Peters, going back gloomily enough to the one absorbing subject, "who did the deed? That's what we must all try to find out—who did the deed?"

"I did!" exploded sharply behind them.

They turned and saw Tom standing in the door, coatless, with tumbled hair and staring eyes. He trembled violently, his hand clutching at the back of a chair.

"I did it!" he repeated defiantly. "Schuyler didn't do it, I did."

"Indeed!" cried Mr. Stratton, reappearing suddenly in the outer door. "And who might this be?"

"He is delirious, can't you see?" cried Dr. Charley indignantly, springing to his side. "He doesn't know what he's saying."

"I do," protested Tom wildly. "I had the pistol. He took it from me."

"Before or after the shot?" said Mr. Stratton.

"Before—no, after," cried Tom, putting his hand to his bursting head.

"Very well," said Mr. Stratton, with a smile for which Charley Beals promptly hated him; "perhaps you can make up your mind before the trial. His brother, did you say?" bringing out the inevitable notebook. "Yes, thanks," and he was gone.

Sam and Charley caught poor Tom, again unconscious, and carried him tenderly to his bed.

"Wasn't that grand!" said Sam Peters admiringly. "You don't suppose he had anything to do with it?"

"Nothing in the world," cried Dr. Charley, blowing his nose. "The door into consciousness opened just a moment, and he supected that Schuyler was in danger. Those two brothers would die for each other."

"Boys," said Mr. Beals, who had been sitting almost forgotten, "if I can help you in any way, call upon me. If you want money"—he winced a little—"I am not so flush as I once was, but what I have is heartily at your service."

"There will not be any trouble about money," said Mr. Manning, rising hastily. "That reminds me that I have some arrangements to make with Schuyler this very morning."

"I have already visited him," said Mr. Beals, "and that reminds *me* I have a note that he wished taken immediately to his wife. What

have I been thinking of ?" And he started hurriedly on his way.

"Father has aged wonderfully these last few months," said Dr. Charley, looking at him. "I cannot understand it. He is ten years older than when I went away."

In the meantime Mr. Beals, greatly reproaching himself, was hastening with the note that Schuyler had written with the first dawning of light,—so slow in coming to his small, high window,—anxious that he only should break the news to that gentle heart. He had written with his unvarying cheerfulness and splendid courage :

"DEAREST OF COMRADES :

"We have been through a great many dark places together, and have always come out triumphantly, hand in hand. Remember this when I tell you that there has been some absurd blunder by which I may be held for a day or two under suspicion of the sad crime of yesterday. Only under suspicion, remember; it will be impossible of proof. Try to be patient and hopeful. I know you will be brave. Remember Montaigne says 'The one virtue in life is cheerfulness.' In fact, I think it is a kind of prophecy that, to the brave souls who harbour it, everything shall surely turn out well.

"Go on, then, with your sweet, helpful, every-

day life, with the sewing women and the children, and before you could believe it, this wintry day will be overpast, and the time of the singing of the birds will have come again.

"I am very comfortable here. When you feel like it, you may come and see. It does not seem quite the place for your daintiness, sweet; and yet I know you will come. Do not, however, until you feel strong enough to laugh with me at all the harmless bolts and gratings. Take it all as a huge joke of Fate—a little grim, perhaps, but still a jest.

"If you think of it, please cover up the poor little 'Magician' on the library table. Let nobody interview him till I come. It is somewhat vexatious to be turned back, again, so near the goal. The only real trial to me is this forced inaction. If I could go on with my work, the days would be minutes. But within these walls, such a dangerous person as I could not be trusted with such dangerous tools. How we shall laugh over it, some time, Dorothy! Remember the guns of the universe are on our side.

"Cheerfully, hopefully, triumphantly,

"Your

"SCHUYLER.

"Later: It is almost worth the struggle to discover how many devoted friends we have.

Mr. Beals could almost embrace me for allowing him to carry you this note. I have had a reception all the morning.

"Do not be troubled about Tom. Dr. Hardy assures me that, with perfect quiet, he will be all right in a few days. Do not let him talk about the fracas, or make any attempt to see me until he is quite himself."

CHAPTER XIII.

DIVERSITIES OF TONGUES.

In the women's sewing room at the Park no less excitement was reigning. Consternation was on every face ; some of the more emotional had been weeping bitterly, and tears still fell upon the work lying idle in their laps.

"He paid all the bills when my brother Johnny's arm was broke," said little Miss Card.

"And he was so kind to my little Tim !" said Mrs. Morey. "I'll never believe he done it, not if an angel comes from heaven to tell it."

"Them high-toned folks does awful queer things sometimes," said Mrs. Jones, who was own sister to the unpopular Patten. "You have to believe things, I suppose, if you see 'em with your own eyes."

"Yes," sighed old Mrs. Grant, a woman reported to have seen a good deal of the wickedness of the world, but whose present ambition it was to pose as an example of humble piety.

"And if you've done a thing you'd better tell of it—it's the best chance for your soul. They say when you get through tryin' to hide your sins, then God begins to hide 'em."

"That may be," said sharp-featured Mrs. Morey significantly, "but, judgin' from the way neighbours talk, there's some folks could give Him a powerful discouragin' job."

The elder woman was preparing a withering retort, when Aunt Patty held up a distressed hand.

"How can we have anything but kind, pitiful thoughts such a morning as this!" she said brokenly.

"Such misery everywhere," said red eyed Miss Brown, "and we all so helpless. If there was anything we could do to comfort poor Mr. Schuyler!"

"Perhaps he'd like to have us try to do our duty," said little Miss Card, taking up her work, and setting a few ineffectual stitches.

"The Fallons feel dreadful bad; the house was like a grave when I come by this morning," said thin Mrs. Harris, in an awed tone. "Not a shutter open from garret to cellar, and yards and yards of weeper on the bell-knob."

"They say Fallon has been like a crazy man, ever since," said Mrs. Morey. "Had three doctors before they could get him to bed. And

Mis' Fallon and Barbary 'most as bad. They say nobody in the house closed an eye all night."

"He was a very likely young man, and they'll move heaven and earth till they find who killed him. My word for it," added Mrs. Jones.

"It was never Mr. Page," cried little Miss Card.

"No! no, indeed!" burst in a kind of groan from every part of the room.

"You'd ought to see Mr. Skinner," pursued Mrs. Jones. "Next to his father, there's nobody takes it so hard as Skinner. He looks as if he hadn't slept a wink for a week."

"It must be a great loss to the poor man," said gentle Aunt Patty.

"I never could abide Mr. Skinner," said Mrs. Harris; "he's a mortal hard man to the poor."

"Not when they're deservin'," said Mrs. Jones sharply. "He couldn't take care of five hundred men, maybe, but he's been more'n kind to Jim Patten. He's helped him to a horse, and set him up as a teamster, and I shouldn't wonder if he'd move him into a drier house. He hain't been so thrivin' in a long time. Mr. Skinner's got an eye in his head; he knows a faithful man when he sees him."

"Well, what Miss Barbara could ever see to fancy in Mr. Wickham, is what's always puzzled

me," said Miss Card, with a shake of her romantic little head.

"The wedding will be put off a long while, now, I reckon," said Mrs. Morey regretfully. "And it won't be any good to Tom Page, either."

"He got hurt pretty bad in the fight, didn't he?" said little Miss Card. "Such a pity! I hope it won't spoil his good looks."

"What was he there for?" said Mrs. Jones, with some asperity. "If he'd been mindin' his own business he wouldn't 'a' come to the bad luck of it. He's always such a meddlin' idiot, pokin' about with them ferrets from Athens, turnin' honest people's houses upside down after them diamonds that was stolen. Nobody knows who'll be suspicioned next."

"I had clean forgotten about the burgling," said Mrs. Morey, with an odd glimmer of pride, "though that was all the talk a week or two ago. It isn't every town that can have two such big things happen in a month."

"Well, I'm sorry Mr. Tom is laid up just now," said little Miss Card, with a desire for fair play. "Mr. Wickham was running in and out for Miss Barbara every five minutes all day, yesterday. I suppose she can't help thinking a heap of him after this."

"Tom Page'll come out all right, don't you

worry!" said Mrs. Jones sharply. "My man says there was a dozen heads broke worse than his, only they didn't make such a cry about it."

"How is poor Mis' Page takin' it all?" asked Mrs. Morey.

"Nancy Patten told me that she hadn't suspicioned a word last night," said Mrs. Jones. "Mis' Parsons was goin' up this mornin' to see how the land lay."

Aunt Patty started slightly. "I'd ought to git up there myself," she said, looking out uneasily at the snow which had been falling heavily all the morning.

"You hadn't ought to think of it," said Uncle Jake, coming in and stamping his heavy boots; "and you havin' such a poor spell all night. Now, you've no call to worry. I've been seein' lots of his friends this mornin', and they're goin' to work it out all right, never fear. They'll have the real scamp by the ear, first thing you know. Them mill hands is gittin' mighty scared, I tell you. When you start to do unlawful things, there's no tellin' where it's goin' to bring you up. I guess they begin to see it's risky playin' with the devil's tail. But it's goin to be all right with Mr. Schuyler, as sure as there's a God in heaven. Why, what have you all been cryin' about? They'll have him out in less'n a week. You'll see!"

"Of course, of course!" cried Aunt Patty, a pretty colour coming in her old cheeks. "And then we'll all give him a dinner, shall we? Right here in the rooms, we'll all help, the best dinner that ever was cooked in the world. Soup and turkey and pies and plum puddings and coffee."

Every eye brightened, and there was a joyful clapping of hands.

"She can do it, if she says so," cried Uncle Jake. "She's the youngest of you all. She'll never git old."

He looked after her admiringly as she ran away, her sweet face still pink with a wonderful freshness. He felt that Schuyler was justified in describing her—as he often delighted to do—by the happy phrase "a person in advanced youth."

"It's the young spirit that's inside of her," added Uncle Jake, "and I'll tell you women a big secret. She and Mr Schuyler is in love with their fellow-creaturs, and that, to my notion, is pretty nigh the same as bein' in love with God, and them that waits on that love and kindness has the promise of renewin' their youth like the eagles. They can't help it. I tell you it's a mighty freshenin' thing. That's bein' young. As for old age—the only real old people, I guess, is them that waits on envy and evil thinkin' and

all contrariness. I guess that's all the old age that ever amounts to anything, whether you're ten years old or a hundred," he chuckled with a shrewd glance at the irate Mrs. Jones.

In the meantime, very slowly and painfully through the snow, Cousin Delia was making her way in the direction of the Page homestead.

Dorothy had been restlessly busy all the morning. The house was in exquisite order; she had decked it with all the roses from the small greenhouse ; she had put on her prettiest gown.

"He sent word that he would be home by noon, didn't he, Kitty?" she was asking for the twentieth time.

"That's the way I understood father," said Kitty, more and more embarrassed as she looked out of the window on the whitening road.

"This will look very cheery to him coming in from the storm," pursued Dorothy, as she placed a fresh log in the already roaring chimney. "I am almost glad of the snow and bluster, it so intensifies one's sense of luxurious shelter. But surely it is time for him to be here! You think I am foolishly anxious to see him—you are laughing at me, I know, but yesterday was a great shock to me. I wonder why the Penfield *Times* hasn't come to-day. Did you look at the door again, Kitty?"

"It isn't there. I suppose there has been a

great demand for them," said Kitty, blushing at the evasion.

It was she herself who had run far down the road, while Dorothy was in the greenhouse, and stopped the boy before he had come in sight. The paper, with its frightful head-lines, was lying safe in her satchel upstairs.

Dorothy, also, came restlessly to the window.

"Can it be possible that that is Cousin Delia?" she said regretfully, as the plodding figure paused at the gate. "What could have brought her out such a day as this? I am cowardly enough to wish she had not come to-day. There is always some blow to parry. One needs to be in good fighting trim for such an encounter." She gave a little joyless laugh as she ran to open the door.

"How could you venture out in such a storm?" she cried as, bringing her in by the fire, she found her fairly gray, with chattering teeth that would not allow her to say a word. "It really was not prudent," she continued, chafing her chilled hands. "You have wonderful energy, but you ought to remember you are not so strong as you were."

Cousin Delia pulled her hands angrily away.

"People make a great talk about my poor spell a week or two ago," she panted, finding her voice. "I wish they'd mind their own busi-

ness! There's nothing really the matter with me. I ain't been sick at heart, no time."

"I'm so glad you are better," said Dorothy soothingly.

"Better?" she snapped. "I'm well. I hain't never been in such health as I've enjoyed the last week. There!" she cried, a look of acute anguish crossing her face, "I've done it again. Them queer powers of the air have been listenin', no doubt. I'll be in my bed to-morrer. You'll see if I ain't!"

Dorothy knew it was vain to try to offer any consolation, but she tried diversion in the shape of some biscuits and a cup of tea. Cousin Delia rapidly rallied in the atmosphere of comfort. She was recalling, besides, that she had come on a very important errand, so engrossing, indeed, that all other claims, for the time, must sink into secondary place. She gave Dorothy a swift look of intense curiosity, and suddenly realised that she was in far greater luck than she had supposed. She had come to offer condolences, but—the thought went through her like wine—it was plain that the blow had not yet fallen. It was possible that she herself was to have the tingling pleasure of announcing the startling news.

"What did you think of the mornin' paper, Dorothy?" she said tentatively, her small eyes riveted upon her face.

"It must have been stolen from the steps," she said carelessly. "I have not seen it. It is just as well; I hate all those painful details."

"Hum!" said Cousin Delia. "Mebbe you mightn't know then that they've caught the man as did it."

Kitty made frantic signs behind Dorothy's back, but Cousin Delia only frowned obstinately back.

"Just wait a minute till father comes," implored Kitty. "He will tell us the exact news. I think I see him now, coming around the bend of the road. Just a minute!" She flung herself out of the room. If she could only hasten him.

"Oh, have they found him?" cried Dorothy. "Oh, the unhappy fellow! Was he a married man?"

"Yes," said Cousin Delia grimly, "and I guess his wife thought he was nigh perfect."

"Oh, poor woman!" cried Dorothy again. "I shall go to see her. How does she bear it? How does she live? And all in this dreadful storm! Have they taken him away from his home yet? Where have they put him?"

"In Penfield Center jail," said Cousin Delia, in a hollow voice.

"Was he in good circumstances?" cried Dorothy. "Is it anybody I know? Did he have a pleasant home?"

"Every mite as good as this is," said Cousin Delia, pleased with her own cleverness. She had not found any situation so absorbingly interesting in a long time. "It's a great change for him," she added.

"To think of this and a prison cell!" said Dorothy, with a shiver.

"Yes, and they say Penfield jail is most particular gloomful and clammy," sighed Cousin Delia.

"Is it anybody I know?" cried Dorothy again, her eyes full of a sweet, frightened pity.

"Yes, you know him; and there's things by-and-by you'll be thankful about. You won't see 'em at first, mebbe. He wa'n't no member of the Church. Sometime, mebbe, when you're thinkin' it over, it'll be a comfort to you that it wasn't a disgrace to the Church. It will, if you try to feel right about it."

"If I try to feel right about it?" repeated Dorothy, putting her hand to her head. Something in Cousin Delia's manner had awakened a cruel alarm. So many times she had been a bird of evil omen! But this? Oh, too incredible! She had grown absurdly nervous. She laughed a shrill, unnatural laugh at her own folly. Cousin Delia was a little frightened.

"Yes, you must try to feel right," she said, a little more timidly. "What on earth has

become of that Kitty Beals? We're all going to stick up for you, Dorothy. I'd 'a' had your Cousin Hiram wheeled over if it hadn't been for the storm. He senses it more than you'd think. There, you ain't goin' to fall or go into no fits, are you? and I all alone with you," cried Cousin Delia reproachfully.

Dorothy had arisen, and in a deathly pallor stood leaning her shaking hand upon the library table. Two or three scenes of the day before were passing in review before her enlightened eyes. She saw Schuyler as he first came home in those frightful, bloodstained garments. Then that company of strangely embarrassed friends, the awkward sheriff, and the policeman with whom he went away. What did it all mean? Cousin Delia's voice came from very far away.

"And I ain't sayin' a word agin him—though mebbe I might, knowin' him to be so masterful for years, as I was allus warnin' you. But some says it was an accident, and they guess most likely he'll git off." She could not help some relenting, Dorothy was so very, very white. "The hull town wants to see justice done him."

"Are you talking about Schuyler?" said Dorothy in a hard, wonderfully clear voice. "Do you mean to say that Schuyler—my Schuyler—is lying in Penfield jail accused of—of——"

"Of the murder of Hallett Fallon. Yes, that's it," said Cousin Delia, with solemn satisfaction; "and I'm glad you're goin' to take it so reasonable."

At that moment, without warning, without sound or sigh, Dorothy fell headlong to the floor just as Mr. Beals was hurrying into the room waving a note in his hand.

The dark, stormy night was shutting in early. The excited crowds of Penfield had melted from the streets, and were seeking in home or saloon that light and warmth and comfortable sense of security which seemed to hedge them from the tragedies of the past two days.

But a pair of very unhappy watchers were still left standing in the shadow of Penfield jail. One was Pete, standing with his sturdy legs far apart, his frozen hands crammed into his pockets, his wide, staring eyes fixed, unwinking, upon the gloomy pile before him. The other was the honourable Toni, his shivering tail tucked between his legs, faithful to the last extremity if need be, but looking wistfully at his master for signs of returning reasonableness.

But Pete was in an extremity of bewilderment. That Mr. Schuyler — Mr. Schuyler Page — should be behind those bars, the companion of thieves and murderers, had produced a moral

earthquake that threatened destruction to every landmark that had hitherto guided his life. If there had been seven wonders in his small world, Schuyler in turn had personated them all. Without him there would be no Pharos lighthouse to beckon him safely over stormy seas; there would be no hanging gardens of certain pleasure and success, balanced midway between the heaven and earth of the future; there was, alas! no Colossus of Rhodes, type of all grandeur, kingliness, and success, to whom he could give his devotion and following. His small land was swept utterly bare.

Nobody had taken the trouble to explain anything to him. All had been simply blankness and dismay. His father even hadn't had a bone to throw to him all day. He had followed him at a safe distance and seen him enter the prison an hour ago. He was waiting for him to come out; and even now, as Toni was giving one last protesting, despairing howl, the door opened, a broad stream of light illumined the white mistiness, and Lame Joe, coming slowly down the steps, cried out:

"What are you doin' here, you young limb?"

All the anguish of Pete's soul culminated in one questioning cry. He waved his small brown hand to the stern, desolate pile.

"Dad, dad!" he cried, in a heart-broken voice, "*Quo honor ducit? Quo honor ducit?*"

Lame Joe was taken with a strangling fit of coughing.

"Yes, yes, I know, sonny," he stammered, when he recovered. "But you hain't seen the end yit by no manner o' means. Don't the sun go down every night and come up agin in the mornin'? There's no sense in bein' so cut up. I'm ashamed of you. Mr. Schuyler will come out of this a bigger man than he ever went in. You mark my words! But there's things to be done, maybe; yes," he added thoughtfully, "there's a good many things his friends had ought to be doin'. P'raps you could help, Pete. Keep your eyes and ears wide open. Worm yourself around where you see there's talkin' goin' on. It ain't allus jest the right thing, but it's all fair in war, I guess, and there's some precious sly rogues to be caught. Don't talk to nobody but your dad, but work, Pete, work like a beaver!"

"I will!" cried young Pete, with an explosiveness so startling to Toni's nerves that he was obliged to rush away into the darkness with wild barkings at an imaginary foe.

They walked home quietly enough after this. Only once Lame Joe burst forth:

"I'd like to know what fool of a boy was

carryin' the pistol that made him all the trouble. Mr. Schuyler don't seem noways clear about it. I told him I'd like, jest once, to lay my hands on that boy!"

Young Pete quaked in his boots; and this naturally led to great wariness, on his part, in discussing the subject with all men, but put an especial damper upon further confidences between him and his father for many a long week to come. If his small confession could ever do any good, he herewith decided, it would be better to confide it to the discreet ear of Mr. Fletcher alone.

CHAPTER XIV.

DAY AFTER DAY.

THREE months had passed since the events which had shaken all Penfield as with the throes of a cyclonic storm. Very busy had been all Schuyler Page's untiring friends, in the interim, but to their immense disappointment, not to say growing uneasiness, nothing of any importance had been discovered, no developments that could throw any light upon the mystery still hanging impenetrably around that fatal day.

The heir of the house of Fallon had been buried with all the useless pomp and circumstance that fail utterly to alleviate one pang of the broken heart. A long retinue followed him to the grave, decorous relatives and friends from far and near, but conspicuous, and most grief-laden among them all, were the Skinners—father and son. If Mr. Fallon shrank, sometimes, from the almost constant companionship, he made no sign. Bowed and aged he again ap-

peared upon the streets, with, apparently, but one interest—one strong desire, that the murderer of his son should be brought to justice. This passion amounted almost to vindictiveness. He had engaged the best legal talent from Athens, and had a certain fierce joy in collecting and laying before the acute lawyers every item of evidence converging upon the criminality of Schuyler Page.

Very anxiously the other side confessed, in secret council, that the case did not look so absolutely simple as at first. There were some facts that, as Mr. Manning expressed it, were "confoundedly awkward," and they began to look forward with an apprehension they would hardly acknowledge to each other to the trial, which was now set for the latter part of April.

There had been no lack of funds. Equally skilful lawyers had been engaged on the side of the defendant, who in council with Mr. Fletcher and Sam Peters were leaving no legal stone unturned. It had been most unfortunate, as Dr. Charley and Sam Peters had thought, that poor Tom had been thrown so hopelessly *hors de combat.* The severe injury to his head had resulted in a lingering brain fever, from which he had partially recovered in such a dazed and enfeebled condition that, with the advice of Dr. Hardy, and at the earnest desire of Schuyler,

he had been hurried away on a sailing vessel, for a long eventless trip, with no chance of any disturbing news. He had been gone two or three months, however, and they were hoping every day for letters from the faithful man who accompanied him, announcing his recovery and his speedy return.

And Dorothy had lived, she knew not how, through all the bitter winter. At first it had been some distraction to tenderly care for Tom, until he had been taken away, his poor mind still in a fog, utterly unable to comprehend the tragedy hanging over their lives. After that, very pale and sweet, she had crept sometimes to the school, she had carried little gifts to the children, for Schuyler had wished her to. She had even tried to be cheerful, since it was like Schuyler, since Schuyler had wished it. Always she carried that first little prison-note next to her heart.

It made not much difference what she did with her day after the hour or two spent with him, when he always fairly drove her forth into the air and sunshine. Why did he think she could find any diversion? Always and everywhere the days of the coming trial lay crushingly upon her. Of course, there could be but one issue—everybody assured her of this—but that Schuyler, her Hercules, should stand for a

moment in the disgrace of a criminal's dock! Could she see it and live?

And still she went mechanically about day after day, trying pathetically to do her duty. Gray, dear Gray, tender and strong, came over from Athens every week, a comfort and ever present help to them all. But, after all, it was only Schuyler's splendid courage that made it possible for her to endure existence. She never smiled except with him, when it seemed the most natural thing in the world. His magnetism could change the prison cell into a throne-room; where Schuyler was, there was the audience chamber of a king.

Kitty Beals, also, stayed with her much of the time. It must be quite settled now between Gray and Kitty, she thought, but they had too much delicacy to say a word. And she could not yet tell them how genuinely glad she was. One cannot speak of such things in the valley of the shadow of death. Still it pleased her to think of the comfort these two unselfish souls must take in working quietly together.

She looked wistfully at them, as she tied on her bonnet one windy March afternoon. For once they had forgotten her. For once they did not notice that she was going out. Gray was reading Kitty some pleasant news from the parish—they were insisting on printing his last

sermon, they were talking of raising his already generous salary. Kitty was listening with rapt attention; they were in another world; for a moment they had forgotten. But *she*—she looked at them with painful surprise—oh, Schuyler! Schuyler!

She was going down to visit Cousin Delia, who had been so ailing the past month that all hard feeling had long ago melted into pity and desire to do something to alleviate her pain. She went every day; it helped to pass the terrible hours. It was even a relief, as counter-irritant, that Cousin Delia was so exacting and unreasonable.

"How could you 'a' been so careless?" she greeted her, with fretful anxiety, as she came in. "You put on the best pillow-cases, yisterday, when you changed 'em, and I told you to be sure to git the second best. I'd ought to be a little savin' with them others."

"What for?" thought Dorothy, as she looked at the pinched face, grown so hollow in the last few weeks. And those wiry feet and hands lying in such rebellious helplessness! There was something very pathetic about it all.

The bed had been moved into the sitting-room that she might command a view of all the small household.

"Dely, Dely!" Cousin Hiram cried uneasily, at intervals, from his chair beside the fire.

"He senses somethin' wrong, and he misses me if I ain't here to speak," she said, with a complacent smile. "He likes a bit of talk when he feels like it."

Dorothy went over and kissed him, and he brightened as he always did at her touch. Sometimes, lately, she had surprised a wistful, searching look, as if his old self slowly rose from unfathomable depths, to look out of the blue windows for a moment. Dorothy patted him tenderly. If anything should happen she should take him to her own home. Schuyler and she had talked it over together. He should never know discomfort or neglect.

Nancy came in with a bit of custard sent by a neighbour.

"They might 'a' knowed I ain't allowed to eat it," she said indignantly. "Why couldn't they think of it when I was around and had an appetite? It's allus the way: Heaven sends nuts to them that has no teeth."

"Perhaps Nancy would like a little," said Dorothy, watching the girl's devouring eyes.

"No, don't waste it," cried Cousin Delia fretfully; "set it away in the cold, mebbe I'll git around to it to-morrow. Did you git me them drops that the doctor ordered, Dorothy?"

"I don't think you asked me, Cousin Delia."

"I'm sure I did, but it don't make no differ-

ence," she said, much offended. "Of course you never give it a thought. When some people has a little trouble, they grow jest like a snail, there ain't room in his house for nobody else but himself. Mebbe"—she added, suspiciously—"you was waitin' for the money;" she felt under her pillow for the pocket-book, always jealously guarded.

"Never mind," said Dorothy gently. "I will see to it right away; I have my purse with me."

"Oh, have you?" said Cousin Delia, with evident relief, "well, I hain't got jest the change, that's a fact. Dear! dear! is that Mis' Bender's voice at the door. She's jest come spyin' around to see the poverty of the land. She's ten year older'n I am, if she's a day."

Aunt Patty came in out of the sharp air with the pretty pink colour in her delicate face that always gave such a sweet after-glow of youth.

Cousin Delia moved irritably. "You'd ought to be more sparin' of yourself, Mis' Bender," she said. "You must be livin' on borrowed time; you must be long past seventy."

"Not so very," said Aunt Patty, with some dignity; "but I'll own to seventy-two. How are you feelin', to-day, Mis' Parsons?"

"Never better in all my born days!" cried Cousin Delia sharply. "Dr. Hardy has been keepin' me in bed jest to make a long bill, but

I'll be up and around by to-morrow. My usefulness ain't over by no manner of means. I'm a good way from bein' what them heathen Chinese calls 'an autumn fan.'" She looked around defiantly. "Your folks was never very long-lived, was they, Mis' Bender? Your ma died quite young, if I remember."

"Yes," assented Aunt Patty, "and my father wasn't fifty."

"I want to know! It must make you uneasy, sometimes. My grandmother was eighty-three, and my mother wasn't much younger, and real handsome, both on 'em, to the very last. I come of good stock."

She stopped for a violent fit of coughing. "Mis' Skinner was sayin'," she continued, after Dorothy had given her her drops, "that before the bells rung for me, there might be many a proud young head laid low."

Aunt Patty looked uneasily toward Dorothy, but she had dropped listlessly into a chair, her cheek upon her hand, oblivious to all around her.

"It is queer, ain't it, Mis' Parsons," she hastened to say, "that we all hold back so from goin' out of our troubles into a great deal better place?"

"Not at all!" snapped Cousin Delia. "I've got as much religion as anybody, but that can't change the fact that Death is a mighty hard-

hearted landlord, that turns you out of your house without givin' you a stick to take with you, and then chases you out on a road you hain't never tried afore. If there is a heaven, I know I'll git there, for I've been an uncommon faithful church member, but sometimes it seems a mighty uncertain place. I've knowed folks that had a temptation there wa'n't no such place after all." Cousin Delia's face was drawn with distressing anxiety.

"Well, you may be sure it was a wicked temptation! I don't set much store by such folks," cried Aunt Patty, struggling with the contents of a large reticule. "Now, here's a piece of poetry I cut out o' the paper that has a heap of comfort in it. Perhaps Miss Dorothy would read it better'n me."

Dorothy roused herself with an effort, and read in her sweet voice:

"'I never saw a moor,
I never saw the sea;
Yet know I how the heather looks,
And what the billows be.

'I never spoke with God,
Nor visited in heaven,
Yet certain am I of the spot,
As if the chart were given.'"

"There!" said Aunt Patty, with sweet triumph, "that's the way some other folks feel."

"Well, mebbe," said Cousin Delia; "but, after all, you can't git 'round it that nobody 'ud like to git there like a tramp—or a ragged friend from the old country, that everybody is ashamed of." She looked around on the loved mahogany chairs and shining gilt-framed pictures; even the well darned carpet was very dear to her. "No, I can't git much comfort out of it," she said. "From the way things has gone all my life I hadn't ought to expect nothing less than that heaven will be a great disappointment to me. But there, what's the good o' such talk! How did we come to be speakin' of it? I ain't goin' to-day, nor to-morrow."

Dorothy arose suddenly. "I must go now, Cousin Delia. I have a great many things to do yet to-night."

"Anything to get away," said Cousin Delia fretfully. "You are allus talkin' of doin', but it never makes no show. You've allus made me think—all your life—of them cars on the side-track, that thinks they're goin' only because every other train is movin' around 'em."

Dorothy almost smiled. "I'll bring the drops to-morrow," she said. "Good-bye, Aunt Patty."

Aunt Patty gathered her tight in her arms. "God bless you, my lamb!" she cried, and then neither could say any more.

"She has lost all her snap," said Cousin Delia,

looking after her. "It hain't done her no good to be married, but I never laid up nothin', and I ain't goin' to turn against her. She knows my ways, and has some good p'ints. After everything is over, I wouldn't mind givin' her a home agin. She'll need friends, and she couldn't live up there so lonesome."

Aunt Patty stared at her with horrified eyes.

"What do you mean?" she cried. "You can't think there's ever any harm coming to Mr. Schuyler?"

"There's justice comin' to him, whatever that may be," said Cousin Delia stonily. "Mis' Skinner says there ain't no doubt he did the deed."

Aunt Patty fairly gasped. "And you have the heart to believe it, Delia Parsons!" she cried. "A man that would never give pain to a fly!"

"He hated Hallett Fallon all the same, there's plenty that knows it. He was jealous, Mis' Skinner says, though *I* can't see why a man 'ud ever give her a second look. She was allus that faded-lookin' from a baby."

Aunt Patty was fairly sobbing. "It's a wicked lie!" she said. "How could anybody ever believe it?"

"You hain't seen him every day. I guess you never caught him in one of his tempers," said Cousin Delia. "'It's only the shoes that knows

if the stockings has holes.' Now I've knowed him, man and boy, for more'n thirty years, and I've warned Dorothy faithful, as she could tell you. He was allus very masterful and tryin'. I was afeared there'd come a time when they couldn't clear his track quick enough."

Aunt Patty got up with a look as near aversion as could come into her gentle, loving face.

"Ask God to forgive you, Delia Parsons!" she said solemnly. "That man will come out without a spot, if there has to be a miracle from heaven."

"I am just as sorry as you be," said Cousin Delia, colouring a little. "I ain't a stone. But what has got to be, will be. You'll see I'm right afore many days is over. Must you go? Well, we hadn't ought to part enemies. Hain't you any news to tell? What's the mill hands doin' nowadays?"

Aunt Patty tried to recover herself; she could not long harbour anger against the poor, panting creature.

"Worse than any time since the soldiers went away," she said. "Mr. Fallon shut down everything, you know, when Mr. Hallett died, and now they're gittin' pretty restless about the mills ever openin' again. Mr. Skinner has took back his promise a dozen times, and it makes 'em ugly. Some of 'em is goin' away to other towns,

but there's plenty left that's ready for any kind of mischief, I'm afeared. And what their poor families is owin' to Mr. Schuyler and Miss Dorothy, words never could tell."

"Schuyler, Schuyler!" cried Cousin Hiram plaintively, by the fire. "I want to see Schuyler!"

"Yes, yes," said Aunt Patty soothingly. "Well, good-bye."

That same evening Dorothy was sitting alone in the firelight, her hands clasped idly in her lap. There seemed absolutely nothing worthy of her doing; there was nothing that appealed to her interest in the great, desolate library, so bare since Schuyler was no longer there. She had gone up restlessly to her own pretty room, and had come as aimlessly back, ever repeating one ceaseless refrain:

"'And every chamber emptied of delight.'"

Kitty had gone home on some errand, immediately after tea, and Graham had accompanied her. She was not expecting them home till much later, but suddenly there was a step upon the piazza, followed by a light tapping at the long library window. She ran to open it, and there stood Barbara—little, fluttering Barbara, all out of breath, and pale as a snowdrop.

"Are you alone, Mrs. Page? Oh, I am so glad!" she began.

Dorothy hesitated a moment. She had seen none of the family since that dreadful day; she could not bear even to mention the name. But the upturned face was so piteous and sweet that, involuntarily, she drew her into her arms, and kissed her tenderly, again and again, after which they both fell a-crying as if their hearts would break.

"I ran away," gasped Barbara at last. "I have wanted to a great many times, but somebody is always watching me. I wished so much to tell you something, Mrs. Page."

Dorothy drew her in by the dim, red firelight, and, no longer able to trust her trembling limbs, sank heavily into a chair. Barbara, a slender wraith in her black, clinging garments, flung herself on the floor at her feet.

"I only wanted to tell you, I could not wait another minute to tell you," she said, her soft, dark eyes full of sympathy, "that I am sure, quite sure, that Mr. Page never did that dreadful thing."

"Oh, I thank you!" cried Dorothy, in a choked, passionate voice. "I never can thank you enough!"

"And mamma thinks so, too," she continued rapidly. "Unhappy as we are, we know that there have been others more unhappy than ourselves. Can you ever forgive us that we have

brought so much misery into your life? And poor papa! try to remember that he is nearly crazy—he does not eat or sleep. Some lawyer or man of business is with him all the time, and there are papers and papers and papers! Sometimes we think that there is some new misfortune hanging over us—something that we don't know anything about. We never smile any more, mamma and I. Our friends are very kind—Mr. Wickham is always ready to do anything for us, but," she hesitated—"I cannot understand why I am so wickedly ungrateful. The more he does, and the more papa insists that I shall try to please him, the more I detest the very sight of him. Oh, I am so unhappy, Mrs. Page!"

Dorothy could only put her arms around her, and smooth the soft, dark hair.

"Did you know that we had heard from Tom lately?" she said, after some minutes of this comforting silent sympathy. "Not from himself directly,—he has not been able to write, you know,—but we have had a long letter from his man, Stevens, this very morning."

"What did he think of him?" said Barbara, with a quick lift of her head. "Could he say he was better?"

"It was both disappointing and encouraging," said Dorothy. "He was certainly much stronger, but there was no improvement in those cruel,

baffling headaches that have so confused him. By the advice of some gentleman they met at one of their ports, who took a great interest in him, they left their sailing vessel in the Indian seas, and went post haste, by steamer and rail, direct to London, to consult a celebrated surgeon there. Stevens wrote as soon as the diagnosis had been given, which was that there was a small piece of bone that had been driven in upon the brain, and was making all the trouble. They have decided on an operation."

"I was sure of it," said Barbara, with a quick shiver.

"But Stevens says it will be a very simple one," said Dorothy gently. "They promise him immediate relief. They say they will make a new man of him. We shall be very anxious, of course, but we hope everything. Poor fellow! I did not suppose I could miss him so. The moment he comes to himself, he will make a bee line for home I am sure."

"Yes, he will come, I think," said Barbara shyly, and even in the firelight Dorothy could see the rosy glow spreading over her face even down to the dimple-cleft chin.

"I was going to tell you—I had a letter myself to-day—from London," she stammered. "It was a little odd," she admitted reluctantly; "he did not speak of—of our great sorrow at all,

and he asked what you and Mr. Schuyler had been doing all winter." She unfolded a bit of paper held tightly in her hand. "No, I do not want a light, Mrs. Page,"—indeed poor Barbara knew every word by heart,—"I can see very well. I thought you would like to hear some things he says.

"'Sometimes,'" she read, "'I have frightful dreams about you all, so vivid that I can hardly persuade myself that some great calamity has not befallen you. Again I am tormented with the suspicion of some important knowledge I have had, in some past age, perhaps, that has rolled away hopelessly into some dim corner of my brain. But though I have, time and again, lighted what small candle of memory I have left, and sought diligently for that lost piece of silver, I utterly fail to find it.

"'Stevens laughs at my fears, but as we have been so many weeks without touching port, and have in some way, as he says, missed nearly all of our letters, I cannot help some anxiety. I have made up my mind to come home as soon as these London doctors can do a little carving on my head, which is only going to be pure enjoyment after all that you have done on my heart.'

"He always will have his joke, you know," said Barbara, while Dorothy again noticed how

red was the reflection of the fire upon the dark, little face. "There is some more of his nonsense," she murmured, running over hastily to herself :

"'But whatever I may forget, one thing goes with me everywhere. The little netted silk purse you sent me the day I went away, lies always next to that long-suffering organ. Forgive me, dear, but I could never put it to the grossness of use.'

"And then he grows quite incoherent again," she continued, reading on with a troubled frown. "At the last, he says :

"'I have waited a day for my closing words, but a thousand hammers are beating in my brain. I dare not read what I have written. My thoughts are all following some cruel Pied Piper out of the town. Good-bye, good-bye, little Barbara.'"

"Poor, dear Tom!" cried Dorothy, with tears in her eyes.

"But now I must run!" cried Barbara, with a quick, frightened look at the clock. "I told Bates to say I was ill; but they will be sending up with messages and broths, and if I am not there! Oh, if papa should find out, he would never get over it! And Mr. Wickham is always walking in the front hall. I came out on the upper balcony—you wouldn't believe it—and

climbed down on the trellis. I used to do it when I was a little girl," she laughed excitedly. "Tom taught me to climb. Now, if I can only get back! Good-bye, dear, dear Mrs. Page. You will be very happy in two or three weeks, I hope; but I wanted you to know now, while, perhaps, it is still a little dark, just how mamma and I felt about it. I thought it might be a comfort."

"The greatest in the world! I cannot express all it is to me," cried Dorothy, again taking her in her arms and kissing the velvety cheeks.

"And by the time Mr. Tom Page comes home, it will be sure to be much brighter. Don't you think everything will be better when he comes home?"

"I am sure it will be very much better for us all when Tom comes home," said Dorothy, with an emphasis that was slightly confusing, but very satisfactory.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BOOMERANG.

In the very last days of this stormy month of March, the great Banner Mills were burned to the ground. The fire had been set in a dozen places, the wild winds had ably helped it on, and in a few hours the destruction was complete and the vast building lay a heap of charred and blackened timbers.

"The men have, at last, put the finishing touch to their idiotic folly," Mr. Manning was saying to Schuyler, the next morning. "They have gratified their foolish revenge, and destroyed a most valuable property, with machinery, renewed last year, of the most modern and expensive kind. The greatest sufferers, of course, will be the men themselves, but it will be a crushing blow to the company, already heavily embarrassed, as I hear. Mr. Fallon's large property might, perhaps, stand the drain, but, from rumours about the streets, there have been some ugly pieces of

business for him to settle lately. I did not always agree with you in your estimate of that man, Page, but it is my belief that in the developments of the next few weeks, you may have the satisfaction of proving yourself the most clear-sighted of us all."

Schuyler was walking to and fro in his narrow prison cell, the prison pallor upon his face. Every attention had been shown him by the indulgent sheriff, and, in the admission of his friends, privileges had been stretched to the utmost. But the long strain and enforced inactivity had worn upon him. He still bore the same undaunted front, but the tension of the strong will was shown in a revolt of the nerves that made him as restless as a caged lion.

"Do not talk of satisfaction in this connection, Manning," he said. "Youth and vigour have a certain ruthlessness in their awards of justice, but after one has known what it is to suffer—after one has been in Hades—he can take no pleasure in seeing a fellow-creature dropped into a fire, no matter how well deserved. And who am I, now, that I should judge any man? What may a few weeks decree my place to be?"

Mr. Manning started. It was the first time he had heard a minor note from the grand, patient captive.

"They will bring triumphant vindication,

Page," he cried warmly; "the bounding pulse of a free man, the congratulations of hosts of friends, a new and fuller life!"

Schuyler smiled, but shook his head slightly. In the long sleepless night watches, as the time of the trial drew near, many dangers and difficulties had presented themselves. To be sure, through some researches of Mr. Fletcher, he had become gratefully confident that Tom was entirely innocent of the deed; he had no farther doubt himself, although the proof only rested on the testimony of a boy. It was a great relief to him. He had never attached any weight to Tom's half-delirious confession; he could almost give thanks for the temporary incompetency that forbade him to repeat it, knowing well to what lengths his loving quixotism might have carried him. In any event, could he ever have accused that stricken, defenceless brother? No, a thousand times no! At whatever cost, he was thankful that he had been able to shield him from even the shadow of crime.

But he had certainly cherished a confident hope that the guilty hand might be traced. In that vast crowd it seemed impossible that such a deed could be done, and no other witness but God. How great, how persistent had been that hope, he did not realise until the slow winter had fully passed, and skilful detective, untiring friend,

and liberal reward had all been equally in vain. Now the way was hedged before him. He must stand the ignominy of the trial—there was no escape; and what would be the result? It had seemed impossible that an absolutely innocent person should be convicted, and yet, again, there was much to cause anxiety. Sometimes in the black, black night, the vindictive hate of Mr. Fallon and clerk Skinner clung to him like a noisome, distorting mist, and then the many small links of circumstantial evidence seemed closing around him as fatally as the serpents of Laocoön. Patten, also! What had he ever done to Patten that he should load his soul with such a damning lie? Oh, how was it going to end? He could bear it for himself, perhaps, but what would it be to Dorothy? Tom, also, in spite of all sacrifice—could he wholly escape the reflected stigma? Would there not always be an impassable gulf between him and his Barbara?

It was all sweeping through his mind as a hundred times before, while Mr. Manning watched the big drops gathering on his brow, the rigid control of his features, the forced, patient smile till his own eyes were growing very moist.

"Well, Page," he cried, "if it isn't over soon, I think I shall go daft myself. I know what a cruel strain it must be to a person of your sensi-

tive fibre. The publicity of the thing alone must be infinitely trying. You are thinking, perhaps, that you can never live it down, but it isn't as bad as you think. Money is a great power, and I meant to have told you. We have been buying up everything far and near; you would be surprised to see how little has drifted through into the newspapers. Of course the trial cannot be suppressed, but we will write up flaming articles on your side—the shameful blunder, the outrage upon a person of your character and genius, a man whose inventions are a benefaction to mankind, whose fame is growing under every civilised flag in the world!"

Schuyler lifted his hand in deprecation.

"Remember, too," went on Mr. Manning, "that in this rushing age we can hardly count on the sorry fame of a nine days' wonder. Some tidal wave of a new sensation is continually arising to carry off all yesterday's *débris* in its undertow. Come, if your busy brain must go on thinking, I'll give you a subject: Put your energies on the speech we are expecting you to make at the big dinner we shall give in celebration of your victory.

"Besides," he added, as something more genuine came into Schuyler's smile, "I have some fine news for you. Your last invention for mak-

ing a lump of coal do the work of a ton," he laughed, "is meeting with great success. Orders are pouring in upon us; you are making the fortunes of the firm. With the income of the other royalties, I have this morning deposited to your account——" He mentioned a sum which made Schuyler's eyes open very wide, indeed.

"Why, at that rate," he said with legitimate pride and pleasure, "there would scarcely be a limit to the possibilities of life."

"Absolutely none!" cried Manning admiringly. "The world would be your oyster, waiting to be opened. And that is not all your good fortune either. I see that the stock of your old Sultan mine is again rising rapidly."

"Yes, I had a dividend in the fall. A new vein had been opened from which they had great hopes. It must be a continued success. I really think I ought to see——"

He made a quick step forward and paused, looking confusedly about. The iron door, the grated window, the watching sentry sank into his heart like lead.

"The irony of it!" he said, sitting down again, with his brave smile. "How very odd! For the moment I had forgotten my limitations."

Some very strong words forced themselves between Mr. Manning's teeth. He felt that he could not bear much longer the sight of this

grand, chained eagle born to soar to the dizziest heights.

"If I ever should get out of this," said Schuyler thoughtfully, "I should like to finish my 'Little Magician Motor.' I have been thinking out one or two big improvements, sitting here in my library." He pointed, smiling, to the rough table on which lay the little Greek Testament the Captain had loved, one or two scientific works, and a copy of Shakspere. "But after that I intend to take my wife under my arm, and go sailing away for a cycle in Cathay. I should like absolute repose as stirless and passionless as the blessed silence of death."

"You ought to have it, perhaps," said Mr. Manning, "but anything like death seems very incongruous in connection with you. Sooner or later there would have to be a resurrection angel—an angel clad in electricity, of course," he laughed, "like the one in the old Hebrew story."

"Like all that come out of that world where, as my Captain used to say, it is the lovely fashion to shine," returned Schuyler, smiling. "I wonder if that Bible hint may not prove to have a scientific basis? Electricity has many uses; it may be quite a tractable semi-material thing in that invisible world, as useful for draperies as yards of shining samite. If we had our best eye-

sight, we might have some illustration of it even here. Perhaps everything has its little vestment of the Undying Fire, like the bush in Horeb."

"Perhaps, if you keep on, Page," said Mr. Manning, greatly pleased to have beguiled him into his old natural, speculative vein, "we may not be far from an age that will see its most gifted sons beginning, literally, to shine forth as the sun."

"There have been greater surprises," smiled Schuyler.

"There might be danger of that general conflagration that they promise us," laughed Mr. Manning, with a shrug. "But I suppose you wouldn't mind that—you would say the poor old earth had died in the Lord, since she had been baptised with water and with fire."

"She need not fear any such fire as that," said Schuyler, smiling again.

A ray of sunshine fell across the floor; he looked at it lovingly.

"I watch for it every day," he said, rising that he might peer through the small grating. "Do you know how wonderful it is? Why do we cry for so-called miracles? Every day I have a revelation of hope from that great burning bush of the sky."

The door grated on its hinges. "Ah, here comes Beals," cried Mr. Manning, "a weary

Atlas with the world on his shoulders! Good-morning, Beals!" he said, rising. "Sorry to hear of your fire. Hope there was full insurance. Good-morning to you both. I am somewhat in a hurry."

Mr. Beals scarcely looked after him as he dropped heavily into a chair, his face seamed with many wrinkles, his mouth drooping painfully at the corners.

"Well, we have about come to the end of it, Schuyler," he said. "The mills are a great loss. Half of the insurance has been allowed to lapse; the remainder may pay some outstanding debts, but the capital appears to be wiped out."

"Impossible!" cried Schuyler. "I thought you told me it had the reputation of being the most solid enterprise in the State."

"I thought so," groaned Mr. Beals, "but there has been no end of chicanery and wholesale robbery somewhere. I think the bottom is out of everything."

"But who has all the thousands of the plant?" said Schuyler. "They cannot utterly have vanished."

"There is only one rich man at present connected with the firm, and that is Skinner," said Mr. Beals viciously. "It is my belief that he has salted away large sums—some in foreign securities cleverly hidden away. Some think he

is getting ready to go abroad himself, to enjoy his rascally gains undisturbed by the uncomfortable suspicions of his neighbours."

"Why allow it?" said Schuyler. "Bring the rascal to justice."

"Where is our proof?" said Mr. Beals hopelessly. "Can we find it in those charred pages saved out of the fire? Worse still,"—he got up and walked the floor nervously,—"those papers are lost—those papers I took from your safe, and put into Hallett Fallon's hands for better keeping. Some very incriminating letters, as I remember—a rascally use of the name of the firm, quite enough to ruin the scamp. But all is gone; we have absolutely no proof that could stand in a court. We should have our labour for our pains if we brought him to trial. Where poor Hallett could have put them is a mystery. His father and I have hunted high and low, but there is not a trace. That Skinner has been as lucky as if he had the Evil One to help him."

"Does Mr. Fallon think him guilty?" asked Schuyler.

Mr. Beals' face worked. He was unwilling to make any humiliating concessions, and yet he was in the grasp of a very disturbing memory. When they had finished looking over the last hopeless package, in their search of the day before, he had surprised an undoubted look of

relief upon Mr. Fallon's face. It was only for a moment—it was swift as the opening and shutting of a door—but, from that time, he felt sure that he was more glad than sorry for the failure.

"Mr. Fallon never explains why he remains in such cordial relations with the Skinners," he said irritably, too weak in his alarm and distress to altogether restrain himself. "He is a man with two shadows—bull-dog father or little terrier son; one or the other is always on guard."

Schuyler looked pityingly at Mr. Beals. He had long foreseen what the end might be, and more than suspected the evil links that might bind the millionaire and his confidential clerk together.

"I hope you are not in very deep, Mr. Beals," he said gently.

"More than half of all I have in the world!" cried Mr. Beals, again beginning to pace the floor.

"But you must have some hold on Mr. Fallon," urged Schuyler. "Did he not assume responsibilities at the outset, which give you a claim upon whatever he may own. Does not that 'King Midas gold' stand behind it all?"

Mr. Beals winced. "He means to make it all right undoubtedly," he said, "but, at present, he is frightfully tied up. He has had too many irons in the fire. He has launched out into too

many enterprises for one brain to control, and, now, there are one or two sudden demands that cannot be met in a moment. You must not be unjust, Schuyler; the most clear-sighted business men must have their seasons of embarrassment. Everybody has been very hard with him—the world is full of rascals; Skinner alone is enough to ruin a man."

"It returns," said Schuyler, half to himself; "by one channel or another; with longer or shorter sweep, inevitably it returns!"

Mr. Beals' face looked pinched and gray.

"Perhaps you have some excuse, Schuyler, but you have never been quite fair to Mr. Fallon," he said, turning to nod recognition to Dr. Peters, who had just entered the room.

The old man looked unusually perturbed. "Were you speaking of Mr. Fallon?" he asked. "He is far from a man to be envied to-day; he is in a heap of trouble. He has been running about all the morning in a frightfully nervous state. There has been some mysterious demand upon him, and unless he can raise an extremely large sum within twenty-four hours, Fletcher tells me that he is in danger of being arrested for a crime—a crime that can only end in State's prison!"

"Can that be so?" cried Schuyler, with eager attention.

"It was last fall—he explained it to me," stammered Mr. Beals incoherently. "You see hundreds of thousands were in jeopardy, and, in the stress of the moment, he hurriedly signed a name to a needed cheque——"

"Not forgery!" exclaimed Schuyler.

"You need not call it so!" cried Mr. Beals, greatly nettled. "You are always so quick! It was not meant to be, of course. He could easily have made it all right, and would, long ago, if it had not been for these mill troubles. It was all in a moment. He was between hammer and anvil, don't you see?"

"I see that it was a very grave mistake, to say the least of it," said Dr. Peters sorrowfully. "Fletcher assures me that if it comes before the courts nothing can save him. Think of the scandal of it, the disgrace to the name of Christianity, the irreparable injury to the young, leading them to mock at the high ideals which have been so outraged!"

"Did Fletcher really say that?" said Mr. Beals, rising and buttoning his coat. "Then, indeed, everything would be at an end. He has been trying to put a mortgage on his house and grounds—splendid property—excellent security. He came to me, but I am a picked chicken. Still I must try to help him; I must see what can be done."

"Wait," said Schuyler, sitting with his head dropped in his hands. He was doing some very hard thinking. Would it be right to try to save this rascal? Did not every insulted principle of earthly and heavenly justice demand that he should suffer? Yes, but alas, for the one stream of being! No man liveth unto himself or dieth unto himself. What would it be to the delicate, refined wife, her whole sad face eloquent of a life of disillusion? What to pretty Barbara—Tom's Barbara? Could he allow such disgrace to fall on innocent heads, already crushed with overmuch sorrow? How about poor Beals, whose last chance of restitution would be gone? How about Mr. Fallon himself, who, after such an alarm, might possibly struggle back to cleaner life? Could he refuse him the chance? Did not the tender-hearted Rabbis tell us that God himself prays, "Let my mercy be greater than my justice?" For what purpose had that golden river flowed to his feet only an hour before? Would it be right or wrong? He could no longer stop to question—his heart had pushed his head from the field!

"Stop, Mr. Beals!" he cried. "You need not go any farther. I will take the mortgage."

"You! Is it possible?" cried Dr. Peters, with uncontrollable emotion. "May God bless you, my son!"

Mr. Beals simply stared. "He would rather die than accept help from you, Schuyler," he stammered after a moment.

"I need not appear in the transaction. Take the mortgage in your own name. Afterward, if you will, you can transfer it to me."

"But have you thought of the amount? Are you Crœsus?" said the still dazed Mr. Beals.

Schuyler in a few words detailed the good fortune of the morning. "And if that sum is not sufficient," he said, "I can sell to excellent advantage, at present, a part of my stock in the Sultan mine. Send Mr. Manning to me, I will give him power to arrange everything."

"It will save him, and perhaps me, too," cried Mr. Beals rapturously. "It will give him time to turn around, you see. You won't regret it, Schuyler. Excellent property!" Then catching a look eloquent of many things on Dr. Peters' expressive face, he added, with some discomfiture, "But have you thought what possible bearing it might have upon your own case? If this man were in limbo, half the danger of your trial would be over."

"I have thought of everything," said Schuyler shortly.

"Beals," said Dr. Peters, in the exaltation of the moment, as they emerged together from the prison walls, "I have judged that man many

times by my narrow rules, but he is an exceptional creation. From time to time, perhaps, in the history of the world such kings of men must appear—we migh almost say after the order of Melchizedek—outside of the ranks of the chosen people, and yet greater than them all. Perhaps our weak eyesight may always need our creed-smoked bits of glass, but the eagles soar into the sun."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE COMING TRIAL.

THE eventful week set apart for the great trial of Schuyler Page for the murder of Hallett Fallon had at length arrived. There had been great difficulty in securing a jury, as nearly every man with an ounce of brains had already prejudged the case. Again and again was every intelligent juror peremptorily challenged until, at last, when the panel was filled, Mr. Fletcher and Mr. Manning, Dr. Charley and Sam Peters, looked at each other with something approaching dismay. First and foremost was Daniel Wiggins, the champion of the people; then followed William Jones, a teamster, David Morey and Jonathan Harris, mill hands, Samuel Keefe, a farmer, Peter Rooney, a saloon-keeper, and so on to the end.

"I never saw a more stolid, unimpressionable set in my life," said Mr. Fletcher, "but they may develop stores of good, strong common sense,

before we get through with them. There shall be no lack of a clear setting forth of the case."

Dorothy had fully intended sitting by Schuyler's side through all the unspeakable days, but at his most urgent request she had protestingly relinquished the dear desire, and Gray was to have the coveted place.

One more thing he asked of her, with that protecting love that was ceaselessly on guard. The night before the dreadful day Pete arrived with another little note.

"Dearest of all dear comrades," she read, "sweetest and prettiest Dorothy, I have still one other request to make of you: Promise me that you will not read the daily papers for just this one week. Everything will be sure to be garbled and distorted, and very painful too, perhaps, since I shall not be with you to laugh over them. Gray will be home every night to tell you just how well everything is going. Courage! there are only a few steps farther.

"Charley Beals has just brought me a most cheering letter from Stevens. Everything has gone wonderfully well, and Tom is quite himself, although they will not yet allow him to write. They hope soon to be on their way home. What a lark we shall all have together!

"Good-bye. I embrace you a thousand times, I kiss your little hands. But you will promise

me not to read the papers. Will you? Won't you? 'Aye, poor ghost!'

"Your

"SCHUYLER."

How could Dorothy refuse? And so she missed all the rush of the torrent that could no longer be held back—the terrible flaming headlines, the minute and unsparing details surrounding a trial that promised to be of extraordinary interest, even among the most sensational of its kind. There were items about the crowds converging from every point of the compass, the country waggons filled with gaping people, the gay streets, the general excitement and stir of the town, cruelly careless, as ever, of the one who is to be slaughtered to make a Roman holiday.

It was mid-April, and wonderfully mild for the season. A lovely gray-green mist was beginning to cling to the trees. Children came from the woods with trails of the sweet-scented arbutus, and the brave robins were in a rapture of cheerfulness over their first love songs. But Dorothy!

> "She could not look on the sweet heaven,
> Either at morn or eventide."

She could not have told if the day were in storm or shine. Whether she were shivering

with cold or burning with heat, it was all the same to her.

Scarcely lifting her heavy eyes, she went through her daily tasks, still going patiently with each returning sun to pass a few hours with Cousin Delia, who was unmistakably failing; struggling with the doctors, rising with strong will from her bed in the morning, only to be hopelessly vanquished before an hour had gone by, battling grimly every inch of the way, she was slowly but surely losing ground. Was there, at last, one enemy before whom that indomitable will must give way? Not yet would she acknowledge it. Still counting her treasures, still searching suspiciously for the loved purse and lost bunches of keys, in the tortured bed-clothes, she had already embarked upon a long journey,—nobody could be blind to it but herself,—a most reluctant voyage, in which all these dear idols must drift hopelessly far astern.

Even the much-tried Nancy had begun to see it, and having "given warning" three times in a week, had finally softened, and been prevailed upon to stay to the end.

Life had, also, been somewhat brightened to her by a growing acquaintance with the versatile young Pete, and his unfailing partner—the sad, wise Toni. Very many grave discussions did they have over the events that were shaking all

Penfield, and many soothing confidences over the trials and vicissitudes of their own lots, so dependent for happiness upon the varying moods of the taskmasters set over them.

Pete came straggling into the back yard the same evening after he had delivered the note to Dorothy. He had been rambling aimlessly in the woods nearly all day, for his place was gone at the mills, and where so many men were idle there was absolutely nothing for a boy to do. He was somewhat cast down, also, for a boy of his cheerful disposition. He had just come from a long talk with Lame Joe, in which that worthy parent could not restrain his reproaches that he had failed so utterly—in common with all the other detectives—in getting any clue to the real criminals in the case of the morrow.

"I'd 'a' thought such a keen little ferret as you would 'a' been in the hole long ago," he said in his bitter disappointment.

Toni also had felt it all keenly, and was walking most dejectedly at his side.

"Yes, you may put your tail between your legs for both of us," said Pete bitterly. "You can't put it too strong the way I'm feelin'."

But as he came in sight of Nancy, a fellow-sufferer, patiently taking down the heavy blankets that had been hung out to air, he rallied a little. He had a great bunch of half-withered

wild flowers he had picked in the woods, which he was going to present to her. Her cheeks were very red and wholesome in spite of her trials, and it had struck him as an exquisite piece of humour to be very gallant in that direction lately.

"Oh, dear!" Nancy was exclaiming as Pete drew near.

"Dear who?" cried Pete promptly, with feigned eagerness. "Do you mean me?"

"No, indeed! What a softy you are!" cried Nancy with an attempt at dignity that scantily veiled her delight.

There was a whirlwind of a sigh.

"Ah!" cried Pete dejectedly, "I wish I was dead!"

Nancy's giggles came near choking her as she coquettishly accepted the flowers. He was to her 'a fellow of infinite jest,' and as he helped her fold the blankets in the sweet spring evening, life was not nearly so hopeless as it had been half an hour before.

Then came the sharp nervous ring of a bell that recalled her to stern duty and Cousin Delia, while Pete could only sit patiently upon the door-step awaiting her return. She came back after a protracted stay, wiping her eyes.

"She's took her drops, and she's goin' off to sleep—thanks be to praise!" she said.

But her cheerful optimism was all gone. She confided to Pete that it was a vale of tears, and she wouldn't care the turning of a penny whether she lived or died. Even if she left Cousin Delia she should only be worse off at home, where she'd been batted like a shuttlecock ever since she could remember.

"Father has allus been comin' home with his face very red," she said, "and somebody had to be flogged before he could quiet down. The children now allus keeps somebody on the watch. They've got a way of whistlin' that carries the news. Oh, you'd ought to see 'em scamper—jest like the leaves before a thunderstorm. Down in the cellar, behind the bushes, under the bed, they'll scuttle away, till when he gits up to the door there ain't one of them eleven children to be found on the place. Of course it is worse hidin' in the winter."

"I'd like to have him tackle me!" said young Pete, squaring off in acute sympathy.

"Oh, my! you don't know what you're talkin' about," cried Nancy, in an awed tone. "He'd crush you as quick as a June-bug. Why, only last night when I ran down to show ma my new hat, I thought he was goin' to kill us all. He'd lost somethin' out of a belt that he carries around his waist, and he swore that awful, and kicked and whipped the boys, till I thought none

of us would be alive to-day, to tell how it all happened." She paused to wipe her eyes. "Ma has been in this afternoon, and she says Jim and Dick is in their beds, so black and blue all over they can't stir. I believe he'd 'a' killed 'em if he hadn't found it?'

"Then he found it after all?" said Pete. "What was it?"

"Yes, the baby had it all the time, and was a-playin' with it, poor innocent! If you'd seen him when his eye lit on it!" cried Nancy, lifting her hands. "Why, if ma hadn't caught up the baby——"

"And I suppose maybe it was only a paper of tobacco after all," said Pete carelessly.

"Oh, no," said Nancy, with a shrewd little smile, "it was something worth more than that. It was something tied up in a rag—something shining and yellow, that chinked. That's the reason baby liked it. He'd got it loose a little too, a-bangin' it round, and when father grabbed for it something bright rolled out on the floor—as bright and twinkly as the ring on Mis' Page's third finger."

"Is that so?" cried Pete, as stiff as a stake. "Did you see it? What did it look like?"

"No, I didn't fairly," said Nancy, with quick reserve. "I couldn't really say what it was like Father had it in a second—maybe it was only

some kind of a button. I guess I've been too free. Ma told me I wasn't to say anything about it. It was some earnin's, she said, that father had been savin' this long time, and he didn't want it known when there's so many bad idle men around that would be ready to steal it. But I know you'll never tell, and I've a good mind to tell you another secret. He's savin' it," she said, sinking her voice to a whisper, "to buy a farm out West. Maybe he'll go right after they get through with him after the trial. Mr. Skinner is goin' to help him. He says father can git to be a howlin' swell out in that new country, and all the boys'll have a chance to git as rich as any of the Pages or Bealses. Maybe you've heered that Mr. Skinner himself is goin' to furrin' parts just as soon as everything is settled. Mr. Wickham's goin' to marry Miss Barbara very quiet," she sighed, "on account of the troubles, and then they're all goin' off on a tower together."

"Mr. Wickham!" cried Pete, with a wry face. "Well, there's no accountin' for tastes, he's such an ugly ape!"

"He's small," confessed Nancy candidly, "but he's worked mortal hard for her. I guess you couldn't help likin' a man that does all your fightin' for you."

"Then that's just what I'm goin' to do for

you, Nancy, dear," cried Pete, with doubled fists.

The hated bell rang loud and furiously.

"Now, don't breathe a word till I tell you," cried Nancy hurriedly. "Though, to be sure, it'll be no secret in jest a few days more."

"But *you* won't go, darling!" cried Pete, with his most languishing air.

"What a guy you are!" cried the admiring and gratified Nancy. "Well, maybe I'll wait a spell till they get settled in a four-story brown stone front, and can send a coach 'n' pair for me."

CHAPTER XVII.

AGAINST THE TIDE.

THE court room at Penfield Center was crowded to its utmost capacity. All rules were broken. It became almost impossible to contend against the persistence of men and women anxious to be present at this extraordinary trial, more absorbing than any drama that had ever been put upon the stage.

The stolid jury was in its place ; the dignified Judge Pelham was in his chair, with face as expressionless and dispassionate as if he were wearing a mask. The keen, sharp-eyed lawyers were arranged for battle, and the alert reporters were sitting with pens poised in their hands.

There was a distinct sensation when the distinguished prisoner was brought in. Taller by nearly a head than anybody around him, he was conspicuous from every part of the room, and nobody could help being struck with the courage, equanimity, sweetness, and decision of

his face. There was a distinct movement of sympathy among the men; they would like to have cheered him. Most of the women were wiping their eyes, Aunt Patty and Miss Brown fairly sobbing with excitement.

After the usual preliminaries the deep voice of the district attorney was heard opening the case and announcing that it was no common event that had called them together. The case, on account of the high social position of the parties and the grave nature of the charge, was invested with an importance far more than ordinary. The momentous proceedings had their origin in the death of Hallett Fallon on the twentieth day of December in the past year, and an indictment had been found against Schuyler Page, alleging that he was guilty of this murder. He hoped that the jurors would feel deeply their great responsibilities on this occasion, remembering that their obligation to the State and the community required that their duty should be faithfully performed. There were many perplexities and mysteries in the case; they might well be overawed with the task set before them; he, himself, had never addressed a jury with a greater feeling of anxiety. It was only by the utmost patience and conscientiousness that they could hope to bring this issue to a righteous result.

It would be wearisome to follow in minutiæ all the details of this trial, so absorbing to the people of Penfield. It is sufficient to deal with the most important witnesses, among whom Dr. Charley Beals was first called to the stand. In a manly, straightforward way he testified that he was called about two o'clock on the twentieth day of December to the Banner Mills, where lay the body of Hallett Fallon. Life had been extinct for fifteen minutes or more. He had found the body lying on the ground, and had examined the wound in the head. The bullet had entered the brain just back of the left ear. Death must have resulted almost immediately. He had extracted the ball, which he had placed in the hands of the sheriff. From the position of the wound, he could not avoid the conclusion that the fatal shot had been fired from the rear.

The next witness was Mr. Wickham Skinner, who testified that he first noticed Schuyler Page in a state of great excitement, not more than twenty feet from Hallett Fallon. He had the pistol raised in his hand, and pointed in the direction of the murdered man. While trying to reach him, in the distraction of the crowd, he lost sight of him for a moment, and before he could look again the shot was fired and all was over. Hallett Fallon himself was greatly stirred at the time, and was so constantly turn-

ing to the right and the left that nobody could predict where a ball might possibly strike him.

Schuyler Page, his head thrown proudly back, looked so intently at the witness at this moment that he slowly faced half around, as if compelled to meet that magnetic gaze. He turned very white as he did so, and replied somewhat hastily to the peremptory question of the cross-examination :

" No. I did not see him fire the shot."

But there was no hesitation about the next witness. Burly, shockheaded Patten came forward with heavy, relentless tread, and testified loudly in a somewhat thick voice.

" I wasn't more'n three feet from the prisoner," he said, " and I saw him raise the tool, take a good, cool aim, and fire right crash into Mr. Hallett's head ! Then he lost his own head, I guess, and didn't know enough to drap the pistol, but jest held on like a gaby till the cop took it away from him."

Nothing could shake this blunt testimony, which was evidently deeply impressing the wide-eyed jury. Patten mopped his face as he finished, and looked anxiously to one side. Schuyler followed his gaze, and saw two men for whose approbation he was plainly making an appeal. One was Mr. Fallon, worn, hollow-eyed, plainly a broken man, but now leaning forward

that he might bring Schuyler into view, with a flush of vindictive gratification most painful to behold.

The two men started slightly as their eyes met. A quick spark seemed to leap from one to the other, as at the clash of two drawn swords. Twice before in his life Schuyler remembered this duel of the eyes. But, now, slowly into the intensity of his gaze grew a grand pity before which the flame in Mr. Fallon's eyes rebelled, wavered, fell. Once more,—the man ground his teeth as he acknowledged it,—once more he felt himself dominated by a power greater than his own. The new look was even more disconcerting than the old.

The other, sitting close by his side, was Skinner, ghastly pale, his shifty light-blue eyes turning in every direction, unable long to meet anybody's gaze. Schuyler was struck with a peculiarity he had noticed before, but had never found so disagreeably assertive. Although the man was small himself, he had abnormally large hands; one almost shuddered without knowing why, they were so cruelly large, with their stubborn square finger ends. Skinner himself seemed embarrassed with consciousness of them, and, behind handkerchief and newspaper, was continually trying to hide them. He was especially restless under the long, calm gaze which had

turned from Mr. Fallon. He even half arose, as if compelled to take himself from under fire, but drew a long breath and fell back when Schuyler, at last, mercifully released him.

"Those men should change places," whispered Sam Peters to Mr. Fletcher. "Did nature ever mould a better model for a prisoner's box?"

Many minor witnesses followed who, more or less reluctantly, testified that they had seen the pistol in Schuyler Page's hand, but no amount of questioning could draw from them any admission that they had seen him fire it. On cross-examination they stated that there had been several other pistols in the crowd, and one witness remembered a small boy, who was brandishing a weapon of that kind in a very careless way.

Young Pete, who had smuggled himself in with the crowd, and was occupying the smallest possible place at Lame Joe's feet, suddenly felt as if he had been impaled upon a spit over a very hot fire. Although everything had been drawn from him by Mr. Fletcher, there had still been much wise reserve in his confidences with his father. The thought of the inevitable crisis when all should be naked and opened, had given him many an uneasy hour, forgotten, again, for days, by his happy-go-lucky spirit. But never before had he fully understood the importance

of the issues to which his escapade might have led. Now, with his blood pumping in his ears with the noise of a cataract, he heard the sheriff testifying that the bullet extracted from Mr. Hallett's head had exactly fitted the pistol Schuyler Page had held in his hand, a six-shooter in which one barrel had been found empty. He held pistol and bullet before the jury.

"Mr. Page," he finished impressively, "has been unable to account for this empty barrel."

"I can!" piped a shrill, anguished voice, which, though promptly suppressed by Lame Joe, caused such a disturbance that the small offender, in spite of a gesture from Mr. Fletcher, was seized by an irate policeman and summarily ejected from the court room.

Mr. Skinner then came forward, looking so wretchedly ill that it awakened much comment.

"He has never looked like himself since Hallett Fallon's death," whispered one to another.

"It must have been a great shock to him."

"Standing by his side not a minute before!"

"His own father doesn't take it any worse."

But they grew suddenly still to hear his testimony, given in a very low voice, to the effect that he had known the man, Schuyler Page, for years, and had always recognised the fact that he had a most irritable, nay, violent temper.

There had been a long feud between Mr. Fallon and himself, based upon some fanciful issue, which had grown until he could scarcely mention that gentleman's name without coupling it with the most intemperate language. This could easily be confirmed by the testimony of nearly everybody within sound of his voice. Of late years the feeling had been intensified, and in the labour troubles of the past few months it had gratified his personal animosity to take the part of the mill hands, encouraging them in feeling that they were victims of injustice, and inciting them to anarchy and violence. He himself had heard him, upon a certain occasion, inveighing against those God-appointed "heads," that must always control the movements of the less gifted members in the body politic. "The guiding 'head,'" Schuyler Page had said, "might feel itself very superior to the rest of the anatomy, but let it remember that the labouring hands have also their power, and the fingers can any time pull the trigger that can send a bullet crashing through the brain."

There was a visible sensation in the jury-box. They could not understand fine-drawn points, and subtleties of evidence, perhaps, but any man knew the connection between triggers and bullets, and that it was not safe, every-day conversation that trifled with them.

In Mr. Fletcher's indignant cross-examination Mr. Skinner was obliged to confess that he overheard this sentence as he was passing a group of gentlemen, and that he could not testify to what had gone before or followed after. Mr. Fletcher, after announcing that it was a wilfully twisted and garbled statement, which would be set in entirely different light in the future testimony, was obliged to allow the case to proceed.

Wickham Skinner was then recalled, and with much alacrity and apparent enjoyment of his temporary importance, he, also, told of his knowledge of the strained relations between Mr. Fallon and Schuyler Page, which, he farther stated, had extended most unreasonably to the son. On one occasion, as he had stood at the door of Mr. Page's library, whither he had gone on some important business, he was shocked to hear him indulging in such violent vituperation of the unfortunate young man that he was quite unable to attract his attention until his passion had fully spent itself.

"Yes," he replied to Mr. Stratton's question regarding the time, "it was in the last year, only a few months before the fatal tragedy."

"Was there any other reason—anything outside this hereditary feud—given for this unusual animosity?" pursued Mr. Stratton.

A look of intense pain crossed Schuyler's

face, and Mr. Fletcher promptly objected. He had given Schuyler his promise that one loved name should be protected as far as possible from the scorching flame of these proceedings.

"I object," he said. "Let us have all the facts you please, but we are not here to listen to the surmises and baseless imaginings of any witness whatsoever."

After some hot contention and wrangling the objection was sustained, Wickham Skinner only adding, as he left the box, that there were plenty who could bear witness to the facts.

Patten was recalled, and there was no uncertainty in his note. Yes, he remembered one day when this Page had found Mr. Hallett up in his park. He recollected well how he had flamed up, and looked angry as a painted devil.

Then Lame Joe limped forward, greatly mortified that he had been called on the prosecution. He proved a painfully stupid witness. He couldn't remember that day in September that Patten told about. His head was bad, he never could remember dates. Mr. Schuyler might have been angry at something,—he lost his temper sometimes like the best of men,—but he had no more hate against Mr. Hallett Fallon than he had against a yellow bumble bee.

Mr. Beals had dropped his head in his hands. He was remembering the scene on the piazza on

the night of the burglary, and the timeliness of Tom's detaining hand. So much can be done in an unguarded moment! Could it be possible? But again he promptly hated himself for the unworthy thought.

Joe was finishing in great incoherency, the only sure items furnished being that he didn't have any head and didn't remember anything.

Mr. Stratton levelled a few sarcasms at him, but Joe was sublimely unconscious as he stumbled to his seat. What was personal loss or humiliation to him? He felt that in some way the day was going against Mr. Schuyler, and he was stunned with the fear of it.

There was one more testimony given, which concerned the burning of the bloodstained garments. The young policeman testified to finding the shreds half consumed in the ashes. The collar stud and sleeve buttons were produced in evidence and fully identified. There was no denying that it was a strange thing for an innocent man to do. Such haste in disposing of all possibly tale-telling evidence could point but one way.

"I had not heard of that, Sky," whispered Gray, looking unspeakably distressed. "That is strange—out of character—I do not understand it. You had held the dying man's head—you had nothing to hide."

But Schuyler said never a word. A few moments after he turned, with his undaunted smile.

"I have scribbled a few words to Dorothy," he said, handing him a scrap of paper. "Promise me to keep this small worrying detail from her knowledge. It will not count for much in the end."

At the close of this first day's proceedings all Schuyler's friends hastened to gather around him and heartily shake his hand, but there was a shadow of apprehension among them that he could not fail to detect.

"It will be our turn next," said Mr. Fletcher and his colleague, the renowned Mr. Griffith from Athens, with encouraging assertion and self-reliance.

But among them all the most unmoved, the most calmly serene, was the prisoner himself.

"If that man is not an innocent man, I never saw more phenomenal pluck," said Mr. Griffith to Mr. Fletcher.

At the same time the lawyers for the prosecution were conferring together.

"Circumstantial evidence seems strong against the prisoner," said Mr. Ingram to the triumphant Mr. Stratton, "but the man is singularly magnetic and attractive. I do my duty with regret.

I feel as if we were yelping hounds who had driven a lion to bay."

Just before dark that same evening Lame Joe was allowed, after great persuasion, to have a brief interview with his loved Mr. Schuyler. He was carrying his feeble little boy in his arms.

"He has heard us all talkin' about you, Mr. Schuyler," he said, "and got to lookin' and pinin' for you, and he seems to be failin' so fast that Almiry said I must take him."

The child's expressive eyes were wonderfully bright; he gave a little cry of delight, stretching out his thin arms. Schuyler took him, and the heavy head lay contentedly on his breast, while the small hands wandered all over his face with light, velvet touches.

"Sky, Sky!" said the child wistfully, "I don't want a funer'l to come after you."

Joe's face grew very red. "Don't it beat all?" he cried, in a vexed tone. "Nobody can never tell what that little kid is goin' to say next. I'll tell you what's in his head, Mr. Schuyler. One of them little Pattens, next door, died along in March some time, and he was all the mornin' sittin' in his little chair, a-watchin' of the funeral. I didn't know it had worked on him so, but he's never forgot it. His ma told him little Billy was goin' away to a garden of flowers, but he seen 'em all a-cryin',

and he puts two and two together, and he didn't take to it a mite. He's deep, Mr. Schuyler, wonderful deep! He wanted me to promise that a funeral shouldn't come after *him*."

"Poor baby!" said Schuyler tenderly.

"But oh, dear me!" cried Joe, recollecting himself, "I wasn't to have but a minute to stay, and I've got something very important to say. What kind of testimony, Mr. Schuyler, would be wantin' to bring you out of this box? There's me, and one or two others I know, that's ready to swear to anything you'd like to have us."

"What!" cried Schuyler.

"Yes," said Joe hurriedly; "don't make up your mind till you've thought about it a spell. They've been swearin' lies against you the hull day. They want to kill you, Mr. Schuyler—the best friend a man ever had," he sobbed. "And besides me, there's Andy Card, and one or two others that you've kept from starvin' this winter, and they sends you their duty, and they're ready for anything you say. Jest give the word. Don't you be afeard, Mr. Schuyler—they'd never blab if they was roasted over a fire. But we ain't none of us clever, and maybe we mightn't make it tail in right. So we want you to map it out for us. But be quick, Mr. Schuyler, for Heaven's sake, be quick! Jest say what tes-

timony you want, and it's ready for your hand."

Schuyler laid his hand upon the man's rough shoulder.

"Joe, I am ashamed of you!" he cried, but his voice was very husky.

"I see, dear, faithful fellow!" he added, in a moment. "I believe you would willingly be cut into inch pieces to save me. I shall never forget it. But not this way, Joe. I couldn't think of it. You wouldn't wish it yourself when you come to think it over."

They heard the sentry already going his early rounds. The brief interview was over.

"No, you and I couldn't do such a thing. *Quo honor ducit*, Joe!" he said, wringing his hand, with a parting smile of such unbounded confidence that it nearly broke Joe's heart.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A PULL FOR LIFE.

THE next day of the trial passed very much like the first. The points already made were emphasised and confirmed by many other witnesses. It was not until the morning of the third day that the prosecution rested its case. Among the very first witnesses called for the defence was a small boy, with big, watery blue eyes, and a flame of red hair about his head. A general smile went around as it popped up in the witness-box.

"Advertisement for the Rising Sun stove polish," whispered a would-be wag in the rear.

"My Pete!" cried Lame Joe, in open-mouthed astonishment.

He had been so full of his own grief the day before that he had hardly given a thought to the boy, or remembered that he had never once encountered him. Indeed Pete, after an interview with Mr. Fletcher, had spent most of his

time in the woods, in great apprehension and remorse, deeming it wiser not to run any risks with his father until he had made what atonement lay in his power.

It would have been comical at any other time to note with what a mixture of trepidation and desperate decision, of fright and manliness, he took the stand. He was put through a sharp ordeal to prove his capacity as a reliable witness.

"How old are you?"

"Thirteen—'most fourteen."

"Do you understand the nature of an oath?"

"Yes."

"What will happen to you if you tell a lie?"

"Go to hell," said Pete promptly.

"Where's that?" murmured a light-hearted young reporter.

Pete thought it a legitimate question. "You couldn't be there a minute afore every stitch would be burnt off of you," he volunteered, much amazed at the sensation caused by this simple statement of fact.

But no more opposition being offered he was duly sworn, and proceeded to tell that on that eventful twentieth day of December, being out of work, and time hanging heavy on his hands, he had climbed up to the top shelf of a closet, and taken his father's pistol to go hunting with. When he got into the streets, he soon found

something unusual was going on, and drifted with the crowd up to the Banner Mills. There Mr. Schuyler saw him, and called Mr. Tom—who was nearest him—to take it away. And then, he guessed Mr. Schuyler might have taken it—he couldn't say, Pete was growing confused.

Lame Joe groaned and turned very white. "Then it was my limb, after all, that has ruined Mr. Schuyler. To think of its turnin' out my boy! Oh, Lord, why was I ever born?"

Mr. Manning leaned over to Mr. Beals.

"Then Tom, also, had it in his hands. Was there anything in that confession? Did Page think so—was he trying to shield him? It would explain some of his perplexing reticence."

Mr. Fletcher was trying to bring Pete back to his facts.

"Then it was your pistol that Mr. Page had in his hands?"

"Yes, dad's pistol."

"And can you tell us how one barrel happened to be empty? Who fired the pistol?"

"I did!" cried Pete.

"Oh, Lord!" gasped Lame Joe.

"And will you tell the court how you came to fire it?" asked Mr. Fletcher.

"That's what I come for," said Pete reproachfully, bracing himself anew upon his sturdy legs.

"You don't give a fellow time to unwind himself. I was jest goin' to tell you, I shot it as I come along—miles from the Banner Mills. I was tryin' to shoot a blamed sparrow."

Mr. Stratton looked at his colleague with a smile of contemptuous pity. Surely they could not expect to do much for their case by such testimony as that! But there were very few in the room that did not recognise the ring of truth in the simple statement. And yet, who killed Hallett Fallon?

"I have a few questions to ask," said Mr. Stratton.

"Trot 'em out," sighed Pete, with such obvious innocence of all disrespect that he passed unreproved.

"Did anybody else see you with the pistol?"

"Yes, lots of 'em."

"Mention one."

"Mr. Wickham Skinner."

"How do you know that he saw you?"

"He told me I'd better watch out, or I'd hurt somebody."

"Were you pushed about much in the crowd?"

"Knocked black and blue."

"And there wasn't any accident—you didn't shoot another sparrow?" said Mr. Stratton, with an exasperating smile.

"Not another thing," cried Pete.

"Don't you think your guardian angel must have been around?"

"Just sniffin'!" cried Pete gratefully.

A ripple of laughter swept over the room; Judge Pelham rapped loudly. If there was any further exhibition of levity, he said,—most unseemly while a human life was hanging in the balance,—he should order the room to be cleared.

A great silence followed, but Mr. Stratton was quite satisfied with himself. He had conveyed the impression that Pete's testimony was an immense joke, not worth any serious consideration. He waved his hand carelessly, in token that he should waste no more time with such a witness.

After Lame Joe had been called forward, and had fully identified the pistol as his own undoubted property, two or three witnesses followed who testified that they had seen it in the hands of Pete, and as to the subsequent transfer to Schuyler Page, of the very same weapon. The closest cross-examination could not shake them from this statement. He held no other pistol.

Others testified that they had seen the prisoner holding the pistol aloft at the time of the fatal shot, but had not seen any smoke or evidence of its being fired. On the contrary they were

quite certain that the noise of the report came from a contrary direction.

In confirmation of this fact Dr. Charley Beals again testified that every indication pointed to some enemy in the rear, and he was quite sure, from the downward direction of the bullet, that the shot had not been fired from below, but from some position still higher than the steps of the mill upon which Hallett Fallon was standing ; nothing could shake him in this conclusion.

Still other witnesses testified that Schuyler Page came into the crowd with the most praiseworthy intentions, and never ceased in his efforts to soothe and pacify the excited and maddened men.

Afterward Mr. Manning was called to the stand, and detailed, in full, the conversation from which the damaging sentence about the "trigger" and the "fingers" had been taken, showing that, in its proper setting, it led to the exact reverse of all Mr. Skinner's conclusions.

Then followed an almost endless train of friends and fellow-citizens, each eager to testify to the exalted character of the man accused of such an incredible crime. Dr. Peters, Mr. Beals, and Dr. Hardy led the way, and men of every rank and station followed with tales of his generosity and brotherliness that brought the most painful flushes to Schuyler's cheeks. It

was plain that he was passing through the torture of an almost unendurable ordeal. There was very sharp cross-questioning, especially in the case of Mr. Beals. Had he never seen this man Schuyler Page so carried away by anger that he lost all self-control, and might almost be said not to be responsible for his actions?

Mr. Beals gave a troubled look in Mr. Fallon's direction; he felt that those hollow eyes were fixed upon him. Nobody could tell what that moment would mean to him in dollars and cents alone. Then all the manhood within him rose bravely and honourably to the occasion. He admitted that Schuyler Page was quick-tempered, but any display of it was generally under circumstances that made it an honour to him. Anger was an infirmity of noble minds, but, in this case, it had been so firmly held in the leash of an upright and honourable nature that he could fearlessly appeal to anybody within reach of his voice to give an instance where, in his most unguarded moments, he had ever wronged or injured a fellow-creature. On the contrary, his life had been one stream of beneficence whose depth and persistence had been suspected by few.

A murmur of approval arose, almost breaking into a cheer, which was promptly suppressed by the judge.

But it was plain that the counsel for the defence, apart from the valuable testimony of Pete, had painfully few facts to bring forward to establish the innocence of their client. Each individual of that great crowd on the twentieth of December, had been, apparently, too much occupied with his own personal interests to give heed to what was going on around him, and the tragic event had been too sudden and unexpected for cool and reliable testimony from any quarter. Their greatest hope lay in the proving of the honourable character of the defendant, which they now proceeded to throw into greater relief by contrast with that of the vicious and degraded man whose single unsupported testimony was bearing so heavily against his life. As the day was finishing with some scathing testimony to the mischievous character of Patten—a terror to his family and all law-abiding people—a man about whom, even now, were hanging grave suspicions whose proof would thoroughly invalidate his testimony, young Pete ventured to creep up noiselessly to his father.

Pride had been struggling with just indignation in Lame Joe's face, ever since Pete had spoken up in such a manly way and evidently won great popularity on every side. The boy's keen eye had not missed the first sign of softening, and he now even dared to poke his father's

ribs with his sharp elbow. Having thus made sure of his attention, he lost no time in pouring into his ears a few items of his last interview with Nancy, which had entirely escaped his memory in the grief and disgrace of the past two days. He had no occasion to find fault with the interest his words created.

"You'd ought to have told me before, Pete," said Lame Joe regretfully. "It's dollars to cents he's got something he wants to hide. If we only could 'a' scotched him before he got in them lies about Mr. Schuyler! But we'll see what can be done."

He hurried away as soon as the session was over, never resting till Mr. Fletcher and Sam Peters, the sheriff and detectives, were all put upon the scent.

But the trial, like time and tide, was waiting for no man. The defence had rested not because there were not plenty more eager testimonies to the character of Schuyler Page, but because the case could gain nothing by any further reiteration. The next morning opened with the plea for the defendant by Mr. Griffith of Athens, a masterly effort in which he carefully reviewed all the dangerous points, showing, especially, how the burning of the bloodstained garments was a hasty but natural and innocent impulse to destroy that which, from tragic

association, would be forever debarred from further use.

He dwelt long, also, over the statement that, granting the character of the man, the foul deed became a simple impossibility. To believe it would produce a confusion in the laws that govern men's minds, as confounding as if, in the natural realm, we should find water trying to run uphill. He denounced the careless sarcasm of Mr. Stratton's whole bearing throughout the trial, as an effort to sneer away a man's life—the effort of a man whose intellect was keyed up to the accomplishment of one purpose—to secure a verdict of "guilty," at any cost. His energies had been debased; he had devoted his talents not to the punishment of the guilty, or the protection of the innocent, but to convict—right or wrong, to convict.

Poor, simple Joe stared at Mr. Stratton, quite expecting him to shrivel in this fierce blaze, and was more than astonished to note the careless, half-bored expression with which this well-fed individual was leisurely trimming his finger-nails. But he fully made up his mind that the two great lawyers could never speak to each other again.

But now Mr. Fletcher was winding up with a glowing peroration. He asked them to look at this man whose name was already an authority

under a half dozen flags—a man whose stainless reputation was an honour to the town that had given him birth. That such a man must have enemies was written in all the histories of the world. If they pulled this eagle from his eyrie, how should they make good the irreparable loss? where again find such strong wings soaring into the sun? In these days of dishonour and low aim, of lax principle and the "remorseless getting of gold," let us pray God that there be more of his like:

"'God give us men! A time like this demands
Strong minds, great hearts, true faith, and ready hands;
Men whom the lust of office does not kill;
Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy;
Men who possess opinions and a will;
Men who have honour; men who will not lie;
Men who can stand before a demagogue,
And damn his treacherous flatteries without winking;
Tall men, sun-crowned, who live above the fog,
In public duty and in private thinking.'"

A rustle like the wind through the forest pines stirred the intense stillness as he paused. Gray turned with a radiant look of love and hope to his brother. Joe drew a long, proud breath, and Pete's eyes shone with a new fire. Honour was coming out a good, practical thing, after all.

Then the sardonic Stratton arose, and in a few

moments was sadly turning the tables, by setting all the damaging evidence in most skilful and formidable array. Again he was putting young Pete, whom he called the Goliath of the defence, in a pillory of ridicule, a laughing stock for all men. He was sneering at the grand testimony which Joe thought had clothed his loved Mr. Schuyler in the robe of a king, but which this glib tongue denounced as a cloak of pharisaism, under which, it was well known, the worst of crimes had always been committed. As has been well said in this nineteenth century, which reverses so many conclusions of the past, there is scarcely a publican now who may not be glad to cry: "I thank thee that I am not as this pharisee!"

Joe's face was again growing gray under this crushing battery of oratory, which was keen, witty, and unsparing to the close. He was so confused and distressed that he scarcely knew when it had come to an end and Judge Pelham's brief dispassionate charge had begun. Of this last, he only heard distinctly the few concluding sentences:

"Gentlemen of the jury, the law imposes upon you the most solemn of all human responsibilities; your province is to determine the facts, and to weigh carefully every item of testimony in this baffling and mysterious case, to the end

that you may render the most strict and impartial justice. Whatever may be your personal inclinations, the voice of prejudice, passion, sympathy, and emotion must be hushed, and a verdict be found strictly conforming with the evidence set before you."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE INTELLIGENT JURY.

It was barely three o'clock when the stolid, important jury filed out of the court room. It had turned out a dreary day; the sweet promise of spring had disappeared for the time under an uncompromising north-east storm. The air was full of damp and chill, a gray fog clung clammily to house and shrub and tree. The jurors felt the cold distinctly disagreeable as they came into the bare, unwarmed room that had been set apart for their deliberations. They were not in the best of humour—they were tired of the whole thing, and anxious to get back to the comfort of their homes. David Morey was shrugged up in his coat; he had taken a heavy cold.

"I don't see why we need be all day about it," said William Jones, the teamster.

"Of course not," cried Daniel Wiggins, the friend of the people. "It is clear enough to my mind."

"Which way?" said one or two voices.

"Guilty!" he rang out fiercely.

"Why, what have you got against him?" said Farmer Keefe mildly, struck with the flavour of personal dislike.

"He's a fraud! He's never been an out-and-out friend of the labouring man, for all his fine talk, and he's always been ready to throw mud at them that were."

"Then he has killed one of his own stripe," said Jonathan Harris, the mill hand.

"Not at all!" cried Wiggins. "Hallett Fallon was more open-handed with us than any of them. Didn't you hear what he was saying when the cold lead settled him? He was coming down handsomely, I tell you. The mills would have been opened, and you'd have had everything your own way, if he could have lived."

"Is that so?" said Harris bitterly. "We owe him something for the deed, then. We've had a cruel winter."

"That's so," cried a fellow-labourer. "It was a sorry thing for us."

"He was always telling us we were going to get the worst of it, you remember," said Wiggins. "Well, it's his turn now. Let's take a ballot."

The result was seven for conviction and five for acquittal.

"Who's holding out so obstinate?" cried Wiggins.

"I can't feel as if he fired that pistol," said mild Samuel Keefe. "I believed that boy. He's just like my Billy."

"Nonsense!" cried Wiggins. "Couldn't you see it was all manufactured? His father put him up to it, and everybody knows Schuyler Page wags that Lame Joe as a dog wags his tail."

"He was very good to my woman and little boys, all winter," said Morey. "I don't feel as if I could go back on him."

"Didn't the judge say expressly that it mustn't be a matter of feeling?" said Wiggins. "You must decide on the evidence."

"What evidence?" said Farmer Keefe stupidly.

"Well, what do you think of Patten, who saw him do the deed? Isn't that straight enough for you?"

"And it looked bad burning the clothes and hiding the coat," said William Jones. "My wife said no innocent man would 'a' done that."

"Well, it wasn't much like a murderer to run and hold the dying man's head," persisted Morey. "What do you suppose he did that for?"

"Remorse, that's plain enough," said Wig-

gins. "He was always ashamed of himself the minute after he got in one of those passions."

"But how did he happen to get in a passion just then?" pursued Farmer Keefe. "What motive could he have for wanting to kill Hallett Fallon?"

Daniel Wiggins laughed coarsely, and two or three men followed his example.

"Now you are coming to the milk in the cocoa-nut," he said. "All the world knows how jealous he was about his pretty wife."

"I never believed it," said Morey.

"It's true!" "It's a slander!" came angrily from different sides.

"How could such a grand man as he be jealous of anybody?" said Farmer Keefe, with mild incredulity.

"Jealous of a tailor's dummy like that!" cried Morey.

"Shame!" cried another; "he was a gentleman, and had seen the world."

"He was a great man with the ladies, I can tell you," said Wiggins significantly. "And Mis' Page is a beautiful woman."

"They didn't say much about it on the trial," said Farmer Keefe.

"No, that Fletcher was always trying to keep it down, don't you remember. But there was many a leak for all that, and I'll warrant you it

was in everybody's mind. Schuyler Page simply hated him."

"Is that every word true?" said Farmer Keefe uneasily.

"I never took much stock in it," said Morey again. "I knew he was down on the old man, though; he thought he had tried to cheat him."

"Ah," said Farmer Keefe, caressing a hard-earned dollar in his pocket, "a man never forgets a thing like that."

"There's more that will be thinking that way about Fallon before the year's over. That's my guess," said Jonathan Harris.

"Going all to pieces," said another. "Looking like death, too. Heart disease, they say."

"Look here, gentlemen," said Wiggins impatiently. "Is this a woman's tea party? Let's stick to our business. What are we here for?"

David Morey had a long coughing spell. "This room is very damp," he said.

"Yes," cried Wiggins; "in Heaven's name, let's get home to a fire and a warm supper!"

There was a sympathetic movement throughout the room. The vision of comfort was very attractive.

"Come, shall we take another ballot? Are we all agreed for conviction?"

"It seemed to me that the judge favoured an

acquittal," said Farmer Keefe, with one more timid effort.

"Of course," cried Wiggins. "Schuyler Page was one of his own kind. Those rich aristocrats always hang together, confound 'em! There'll be no harm in having one less to fight against the wages of the poor. But he certainly told you to look at the facts—there's no denying the facts. What are you going to do with the facts?"

"I didn't know he was feeling quite so hard to 'em both—father and son both," said Farmer Keefe, with signs of yielding.

"Yes, it's the finding of the motive that really makes the case so strong, you see," cried Wiggins. "Don't you remember Stratton spoke of the suppressed testimony which would have furnished full proof of the motive? The proof of the motive—that's the thing you can't get around."

David Morey was taken with another strangling fit of coughing.

"You'll be lucky if it doesn't go into pneumonia," said Wiggins, with hypocritical sympathy, greatly enjoying his horror at the suggestion. "Come, gentlemen, don't be childish. Let us brace up and do our duty!"

"What do you suppose they would do to him?" said Morey uneasily.

"Oh, a mere nothing—a light sentence—a pardon, most likely," said Wiggins bitterly. "It wouldn't be the same sauce as for you and me. He'll get off without much more than a fright."

The afternoon was wearing away. It was already unnaturally dark and gloomy; the rain was dashing spitefully against the windows. All the men had been gradually talked over except Farmer Keefe and Morey, and the rest were beginning to be very impatient with them.

"A little more and we shall be locked up for the night," said William Jones irritably.

"I didn't quite like all that talk about the 'trigger,'" said Farmer Keefe uneasily. "They dressed it over, but it's bad when things need so much explanation."

Morey was working his hands. He could not bear to give up this man, Schuyler Page, and yet—the room was frightfully damp—was he ready to risk his own life for him?

"Don't they sometimes say 'Guilty, but recommended to mercy'?" he said hoarsely. "Don't that make a big difference?"

Wiggins caught at the suggestion. "Yes, that's it. Put it that way. Make the recommendation as strong as you please. Come, gentlemen, are we all agreed?"

David Morey hesitated—his teeth chattered

—he was afraid he was getting a congestive chill. After all, who killed Hallett Fallon if this man did not! The facts were very strong.

"Perhaps it is wrong," whispered the gentle, shrinking Farmer Keefe, "to hold out so obstinate against ten men with minds every mite as good as our own."

In the meantime the crowds sent forth from the court room, when the judge dismissed the twelve men to their duty, had not wandered far away. The people had hoped for a speedy verdict, and most of them had remained sitting patiently on the court-house steps, or wandering in the vicinity, ready to return at a moment's notice. At first there had been a steady roar of excited conversation, but as the slow moments rolled on a strained silence was settling upon them all. The slow drip of the rain was singularly depressing, the dark, early shadows were creeping in an unfriendly way down the narrow streets.

It was nearly six o'clock when the jury at last came to a verdict, and judge and prisoner, having been hastily summoned, the crowd surged back overwhelmingly, filling every available space to suffocation. But immediately all was hushed silence and strained attention, as the jury filed slowly in with eyes fixed upon the ground.

The Intelligent Jury.

"A bad omen," murmured Mr. Fletcher to Sam Peters, but even then he did not imagine the full catastrophe that burst upon them like a thunderbolt. The dry voice of the clerk of the court broke the silence:

"Gentlemen of the jury, have you agreed upon your verdict?"

Foreman Wiggins made a step forward with dignified importance. There was a pause in which the buzzing of a big fly upon the window-pane was clearly audible, and the court-room clock was a painful and impertinent intrusion.

"Guilty, or not guilty?"

"Guilty of murder in the first degree, but recommended to mercy."

"Strongly," whispered Morey.

"Strongly recommended to mercy," repeated Wiggins.

The silence for a moment was appalling; men, with paling faces, looked at each other in a sort of daze. Something had been said—something odd, monstrous, incredible! They could not take it in. Mr. Fletcher was even smiling vaguely at Mr. Beals. Then, as if by one impulse, every eye was turned upon the prisoner, Schuyler Page. He was leaning slightly forward, his keen, intense, beautiful face deathly pale, but without a shadow of craven fear, the most serene of them all.

The spell was broken. Almost as with the voice of one man, a groan swept over the crowded room. Then the voice of a boy was heard hoarsely sobbing aloud, to which was added the long, mournful howl of a dog—the unhappy Toni, who had, in some way, eluded observation, and had been lying in patient misery hidden by the coat of his master.

The effect was positively unnerving. The judge had never known such a testimonial of universal grief. It was some moments before he could sufficiently control his emotion to adjourn the court and remand the prisoner for sentence at ten o'clock the next morning.

Friends and counsel gathered wildly about Schuyler as they were removing him. He was trying to send a message by Gray, who, worn by sleeplessness and anxiety, was fairly staggering by his side.

"Do not tell her to-night," he was saying. "Bring her down to me to-morrow. I must tell her myself."

Gray could only wring his hand; his white lips moved, but no word escaped.

"The most infamous verdict that ever was rendered!" Mr. Fletcher was saying.

"The maddest of blunders!" exclaimed Mr. Manning.

"Every man on that jury will be a marked

man for life," said Dr. Charley Beals, clenching his fist.

"Don't mind it!" cried Sam Peters. "We'll save you yet."

"Yes, yes, my friends, I thank you heartily," said Schuyler, a faint smile curving his handsome mouth. "One and all, I thank you," he repeated as he struggled to the carriage. "To-morrow I will see you, Beals—Manning—Charley. I should like to be all alone to-night. Poor old Joe!" he added, as that worthy stalked by, his eyes set in a vacant stare, without even turning his head.

The carriage door banged, the horses clattered over the stones, the bobbing heads drifted this way and that through the dank, dripping streets, not altogether without solace—still hugging themselves in the bliss of a freedom in such exquisite contrast with the strangling network around that lonely man going through that dark prison door, with the key grating in the lock behind him.

But Schuyler was conscious of no loneliness. Rather the plain, bare cell was a relief—kindly as a friend after that room with walls of human eyes, always and everywhere, only staring eyes! Besides he had much thinking to do. He must steady himself; he must adjust this incredible thing that had come into his life; perhaps

arrange some plan for future action. But first he must reduce his chaotic mind to order. He must be absolutely alone.

But there was one on the way to his side who would listen to no denial, who had been travelling far with reckless haste, who had arrived on the train just in time to meet the scattering crowds, who had learned the last news in a few, swift, eager questions, and had flung himself headlong to the jail. The kind-hearted sheriff could not refuse his plea. Down the dim corridor came a springing step that made Schuyler start and raise his heavy eyes. The door flew open, there was a broken exclamation, and in a moment he was clasped in an iron embrace.

"Sky, Sky, old fellow!" cried Tom, and then, with tears of which neither was ashamed, they were weeping on each other's necks. Schuyler was the first to recover himself.

"Thank God, it is the old Tom!" he said, holding him off to look fondly at the bronzed face and muscular frame "You are quite yourself again."

"Yes, but so late!" cried Tom. "Do you think I shouldn't have been with you before if—Why, everything came back to me in a minute. What *is* man anyway, Sky—body or soul? To think that a little bit of bone in the wrong place

can change a man into a coward and a sneak and a brutal, unfeeling beast!"

"There, won't that do, Tom?" smiled Schuyler. "In the forty stripes spare yourself one, at least."

"No," cried Tom, in his old vehement way. "No abuse would be too great if it had really been I. What I have suffered since I came to myself, no words can convey. The anguish has retarded my recovery, and kept me from reaching you sooner. I thought I should go mad. Stevens had all the news. He tried to keep it from me, but I should have dragged it out with red-hot pincers if necessary. He found it wisest to tell me."

"And oh, Sky, Sky!" cried Tom, choking again, and seizing both his hands. "Didn't you know I should see through you? Don't you suppose I know what you have been trying to do for me? Manning told me it never came out till the trial that I, also, held that pistol in my hand. At the risk of every misunderstanding, you never betrayed it. You thought that, by accident, I had fired it, but you never spoke. You were determined to shield me—even unto death, just as you promised, old fellow!" Tom cried like a child.

Schuyler was greatly moved. Nothing had so emphasised the shadow that had fallen on his

house as this utter breaking down on the part of his light-hearted brother. Could this be Tom, that merry fellow who had always been coming so gaily down life's pathway? always

> "With random scraps of song,
> Whipping the tandem hours along?"

"Don't give me credit for too much, Tom," he said, trying to speak lightly. "I confess I thought it was an accident, but I knew very soon, through Pete, that you were as innocent as myself."

"Yes, I did not fire that pistol," said Tom solemnly, "but I should have been here to share the accusation with you. I had such a vivid dream, Schuyler! It was one of the first things I remembered. I thought I was trying to save you. I tried desperately to take it all on myself."

"It was not a dream, Tom," said Schuyler huskily; and he briefly detailed the scene in Dr. Charley's office.

"Thank God, I tried!" cried Tom. "But all the same it is you who have been left to bear everything, and it is I who have been shielded from the first breath of suspicion. Oh, why wasn't I here?"

"What good?" said Schuyler. "Pete's testimony would have cleared you."

"It didn't clear you, it seems," cried Tom bitterly. "In many men's minds, no doubt, a suspicion would have always clung to me. But you wouldn't let the least shadow touch me. Such a mistake, dear old fellow! Why shouldn't I have been the victim—since victim there must be—instead of you who are worth a dozen of me!"

"You forget that my case is very different," said Schuyler gently. "Somebody has sworn positively that he saw me do the deed."

"Infamous!" cried Tom passionately. "I heard the report before the pistol left my hand. I could have sworn it. Oh, why wasn't I here?"

"It would have done no good, Tom, unless the real murderer can be found. There seems to be a coil of circumstantial evidence against me, that must fatally influence the mind of the average jury."

"You don't mean that you have a thought of sitting down under this decision," cried Tom, in great agitation. "There are a thousand things to be done—a new trial—a pardon—what not? You have hosts of friends."

"What need to prolong the misery?" said Schuyler wearily. "They must have a victim. There would be the same result. And, Tom—I am glad that I thought of it—I want no tampering with the sentence, no importunity to the

justice, who must do his simple duty. I could not bear a sentence, more or less long, to the State prison. I infinitely prefer death. You see, I should die of slow starvation, Tom—not physical, but the slow fainting and dying of desires and capabilities for want of anything to feed upon, the withering of powers for want of exercise. Do not let me be recommended to such frightful mercy as that! Speak to Beals and Fletcher and the rest. Promise me, Tom."

"Yes, I'll speak to them," said Tom, between his clenched teeth. "I promise you, I'll do a great deal of speaking to-night."

"Remember," he continued, "I am not afraid of death. Perhaps it is cowardly to be so much more afraid of life under such humiliating conditions. It is absurd, but I confess to you that the prison garments alone would be unspeakable degradation. Think, instead, of the rescue and triumph of death! Think, Tom," he struggled to speak lightly, "think of going at once from this outlying province of the universe, from this little earth hamlet, to the glowing central city, the metropolis of all powers and forces! Then, again, I have never had half time enough for all my plans; I have always been short of time, that best of spending money. Think of having millenniums for a holiday trip! and all eternity, so to speak, in one's pocket."

Tom stared. "How like you, Sky! You almost made me forget everything. Almost thou persuadest me to be an idiot! But look back on the hamlet a moment," he said reproachfully. "I will not speak of myself. Have you thought of Dorothy?"

"Have I thought of Dorothy!" cried Schuyler, with infinite tenderness, a spasm of pain contracting his face. He could not speak for a few minutes.

"I think constantly of her," he said at last, with a great effort. "It is for her sake, especially, I wish it short. A quick, sharp stroke can be better borne than the long anguish of a living sorrow. You and Gray will be everything to her. I leave the 'little brother' to your tenderest care. There will be plenty from my inventions to provide for her every want. She will live a little while to carry out some of the plans we have talked over together. It will pass—the longest life is but a breath."

But Tom saw how his breast was heaving, and how each sentence came short and tense with the exercise of all his strong controlling will. A mad, blind rage possessed him. Something must be done! If he were the only man against the universe, something should be done. He arose impulsively, he could spare no more time.

"Come to-morrow, Tom, and bring Manning,"

said Schuyler. "I want to arrange a little matter. I want to put a certain mortgage in your hands. It will be safer with you than with anybody else. You will know what to do with it. It may be of use some day—years hence, perhaps, when all these events are mercifully softened by time—it may smooth the way to Barbara."

"I do not in the least understand what you mean," said Tom brokenly, "but there would be no future for me if you were left out of it. As for Barbara—I can see nothing, now, but a fiery sword turning every way to keep that tree of life. Her brother and my brother! O Sky!" He buried his face in his hands.

"And yet some day," said Schuyler gently, "that dawns just like any other, may come up with the cruel secret in its hands that has baffled us so long. If the past should be so redeemed from all disgrace, do not refuse to be happy, Tom, even if, for some of us, the laggard hour is late, and all is lost but honour."

"Am I a monster, Sky?" cried Tom, with sorrowful indignation. "Could I look for any happiness with the daughter of a man who had hounded you to death? No! that spectre would always stand across my path. But I cannot stop to argue."

"Must you go, Tom? Well, remember my

messages to Fletcher, Manning, and the rest. Remember that it would be a cruel kindness to give me the chamber of inquisition in place of death—death by electricity, my lifelong companion, my friend! The death which the gods send to their favourites"—he half smiled. "It would be absolutely painless—I could arrange it. I could be of some help, perhaps; I know just how many volts—why, Tom! why, old fellow, forgive me!" he cried, putting out his hand to catch him.

Tom, white to the lips, was tottering against the door.

"You did not mean to be cruel, Sky," he gasped, recovering himself. "But you should remember what a thread-paper fellow I am compared to you. There, not another word! You are taxed, overstrained. Try to rest." He wrung his hand. "I shall be here early in the morning."

CHAPTER XX.

A ROUND TURN.

At the prison door Tom ran into a company of five or six men moving rapidly by. One started with a cry of delight, as the electric light flashed through the rain upon his face.

"Can that be Tom Page!" cried a welcome voice, and, immediately, he found one hand heartily shaken by Dr. Charley Beals, while the other was nearly wrung off by Sam Peters.

"What good fortune!" cried Charley fervently. "You are the very man we were wishing for! Are you all right? You look so. A thousand questions to ask you some time! But, now, we have only one thought, which, of course, is also yours. Come with us! Those fellows in front are detectives and policemen. We have heard some facts that make us think we have got on the track of one of the scamps who broke Schuyler's safe. He's that brute,

Patten, the very man, you know, whose testimony was so damaging on the trial."

"It is no matter about the burglary," said Tom irritably. "I want to see Fletcher about postponing that sentence. I haven't a moment to lose."

"You shan't lose anything by this, I promise you," cried Sam Peters. "We are all working just as hard as you are. Perhaps we have all gone off our heads, but we hope that something is going to grow out of this—some clue to the great mystery. Fletcher thinks it is all connected, and we hope he is right. We are going to take the fellow down to Fletcher's office and put on the thumb-screw. Come, it is only a few steps."

The policemen were already disappearing down a dark side street in which the street lamps shone feebly—dim, blurred moons of light that failed utterly to illuminate the black mist. The three friends hastened after, stumbling over the shiny stones till they came to the house, set back in a small yard filled with the refuse of decaying vegetables, and with many pits for the unwary in the green water standing everywhere in shallow pools.

Patten himself came to the door in one of his most uproarious moods. He had been drinking heavily with some of his cronies, over the

result of the trial, and had finally come home in such a well-recognised state that the dim room was utterly empty of all but his timid wife, cowering in one corner. Of all the eleven little Pattens there was not one to be found—not one who had not scuttled away to his own favourite covert from the tempest.

Patten, even in his intoxicated state, was alarmed and intimidated at the invasion of so many strange men, and hurriedly tried to close the door. He was not quick enough, however, and, after a moment of vain struggle, he found himself pinioned, helpless in the grasp of a strong man on either side. He stormed loudly. What did they mean by forcing themselves into an honest man's house? He hadn't been doing anything. He should have the law on them.

But all of his vapouring came to a sudden end when one of the officers simply said:

"We have a warrant for your arrest on the charge of burglary."

Patten's mouth dropped. His hand went involuntarily to his waistband. Then he burst into maudlin tears. He had always been an honest law-abiding man, he said. Mr. Skinner would tell them so. Would they send for Mr. Skinner? He could prove everything. He had always done what Mr. Skinner had told him to,

and he had promised to take care of him. Were they going to drag him off like a dog? Well, if he must go, let him put on another coat; he had on his working clothes, he wasn't fit to go among gentlemen, he wasn't, indeed.

His fright, when he found that this could not be allowed, was pitiable. Underneath all the bloat and flame of his sodden face, he grew a ghastly white, and protesting abjectly that they must send for Mr. Skinner, they drew him forward limply enough.

"They won't hurt him, will they, gentlemen?" cried the poor, patient wife, following a few steps with her apron to her eyes.

Tom looked around to say a kind word, and lo! the dry twig of the house, like Aaron's rod, was suddenly budding and blossoming with life. From under beds, behind closet doors, out of a wood-box, even suspended in some wonderful gymnastic way from a peg over which the mother had flung a shawl, from every part of the room was slowly emerging a bright-eyed, wriggling young Patten. The effect was startling. Even in the stress of the moment he could not help answering Charley's smile as one small ambassador pattered stealthily down the street after them, to offer obligingly:

"Keep him as long as you want to."

Arrived at Mr. Fletcher's, there was a speedy

examination in his private room, resulting in finding, as they had hoped, the tell-tale belt around Patten's body. In it was carefully secreted a number of gold pieces, which Tom was able to identify on the spot, having often looked over the rare coins with his mother, and knowing the very dates by heart. Besides that, there were two diamonds rudely broken off from some chain, which Tom was sure Schuyler could place as being part of the family jewels that had been re-set for his wife.

The big, burly Patten talked incoherently all the time. The situation had somewhat sobered him, but he was still too much in his cups to exercise much self control, and, from time to time, made damaging admissions that were carefully noted by his captors.

"What are you goin' to do with me? I'm as innocent as the babe unborn. I never did nothing but what I was bid. They egged me on. They said I should never come to any harm. They said they'd see to it all."

"Who said?" cried Mr. Fletcher.

Patten immediately became profoundly wise. He shook his head with drunken gravity.

"It's best to lie low," he muttered to himself. "They'll give me more money."

Fletcher's quick ears caught it. "That may come very good to your wife and children

when you are in State's prison," he said coolly.

"State's prison!" stammered Patten. "You don't mean anybody could put me in such a hole as that!"

"For twenty years at the very least!" said Mr. Fletcher.

"At the very least!" echoed Sam Peters.

Patten's lip quivered. "Send for Mr. Skinner," he panted. "He'll find me a way out of it."

"There is only one way," said Mr. Fletcher thoughtfully. "If you should confess everything—turn State's evidence—you might get off quite lightly."

Patten blubbered weakly. "Is that the only way?" he said.

"Most surely! Mr. Skinner could not help you in the least. Put that entirely out of your mind. Unless you can give a satisfactory explanation of how you came by this money and diamonds, I shall do my best to give you twenty years."

"You'll get it, too," said one of the detectives.

"And if I do tell?" said Patten, weakening a little.

"We'll all do what we can to help you," cried Sam and Charley together.

"Yes, hurry him up," cried Tom nervously. "I must get to more important business."

"Well," said Patten anxiously, "if I must, and if you'll all give your word, gentlemen?" they eagerly nodded—"There was three of us. There was Mr. Jabez Skinner, and Mr. Wickham Skinner, and me."

They all exchanged looks of genuine surprise.

"The Skinners!" cried Mr. Fletcher. "I should hardly have thought they could descend to that!"

"They've been making their money in a much easier way for years," said Tom, "and keeping clear of the law besides. I confess I don't see what attraction our little pile could have had for them."

"They didn't care so much for the swag," said Patten, with a shrewd wink, "they was lookin' for something else, but they didn't get it, all the same."

"Ah, they didn't get it?" said Mr. Fletcher, laughing carelessly. "That was a good joke."

"Yes," said Patten, with a malicious leer, "they didn't get it—not then," he added, mumbling to himself.

But again Mr. Fletcher's sharp ears did not fail him.

"Then I suppose they gave all the booty to you!" he said.

"Not they," said Patten resentfully. "They said it would be tough to get rid of, and I'd be sure to make a mess of it. They give me a few gold pieces that I was to bring to them along as I wanted the money on 'em. I'd 'a' blowed the whole thing if they hadn't. And they was goin' to help me buy a farm out West. But I broke off them two stones the minute I laid hands on the chain, and had 'em in my pocket quicker'n wink. They worried about 'em considerable—thought they'd caught in the hinge of the door. But they didn't have time to do much lookin'. You see," he said, warming with a sense of his importance, with all these men hanging breathless on his words, "Jim Patten wasn't quite such a fool as they took him to be."

"When did you say they found those papers they were looking for?" said Mr. Fletcher, suddenly, in an ordinary, every-day tone.

"Why, last winter—you know the day that—— Oh, Lord!" he cried, with a burst of profanity. "I don't know a word about it. I didn't have anything to do with it. I'm just as innocent as one of them saints on a church window. I am, indeed, gentlemen!"

Great drops of moisture were standing on his face.

"Why I—I—wasn't saying anything, gentlemen. Why don't you let me go? I've told

everything—my word for it. I've emptied my sack."

"Not quite," said Mr. Fletcher sternly, advancing a step. "James Patten, tell what you know about the murder of Hallett Fallon!"

Patten's jaw dropped, his face became livid, he trembled violently.

"You want to hang me!" he gasped.

"I will if I can!" said Mr. Fletcher.

"But you gave your promise," cried Patten wildly. "And I didn't do it. I tell you, I didn't do it!"

Tom sprang forward white to the lips, in the grasp of a sudden suggestion.

"Patten," he cried, taking his shoulder in iron grip, his eyes like a flame of fire, "where was Skinner standing when he shot that man?"

"How did you find out?" said Patten, in an awe-struck whisper. "Upstairs"—he just breathed it; they bent forward to hear him in the most intense silence. "In the room they rigged up—for an office—behind the shutter—just south of the big door——"

The words dropped out slowly one by one, as if some compelling force had dragged them from him.

The wild cheer that burst from every throat in the room aroused Patten to the knowledge that he had again been tricked, and led into an

irreparable disclosure. He struggled in the arms of his captors like a wild animal caught in a trap, he tore at his hair—he cursed himself for a fool. When all was over, he sat trembling like a leaf. Tom had fallen, almost fainting, into a chair. He thought the joy would burst his heart. Charley and Sam were shaking hands with him again and again, in the most fatuous manner. Mr. Fletcher, in a very shaky voice, was trying to go on with his questioning.

"How can you prove that it was Mr. Skinner behind the shutter?" he said.

Patten, breathing heavily, looked with bloodshot eyes from one side to the other. His only hope was in the mercy of his present captors.

"I'd followed him in," he said huskily "I had to have some money. He was always dodgin' me. He left Mr. Fallon and Mr. Beals in the big room with the machinery, and went up to the second story, and I after him. He looked yellow as wax. He had a pistol half drawed out of his pocket. When he see me, he was stavin' mad. Then he thought better of it. He pulls me to the window. 'If that man lives,' he says, 'I never can give you the money for the farm.' Then he makes me hold the shutter on a crack for him—it was blowin' in the wind, I didn't want to do it," he whimpered abjectly;

"and afore I'd fairly sensed anything, it was bang! and everything was over!"

Everybody could see that this was the most absolute, transparent truth. It was a great sensation.

"Then," continued Patten, his voice more hollow than ever, "he said that if I ever breathed a word, I'd be just as sure to swing as he was. But you'll see to that, gentlemen; you've give me your word," he sobbed, his huge frame heaving convulsively.

"We shall see what can be done," said Mr. Fletcher, trying to control his repulsion. "Now, when did Mr. Skinner find those papers?"

"Afterward, when they brought poor Mr. Hallett into the mill. He was pretending to help the doctors. He took off his coat. They were in the inside pocket."

"Was there any other witness to confirm any part of this story?" asked Mr. Fletcher.

"There was Johnny Duff, the watchman, he see us both goin' up, though Mr. Skinner didn't know it till I told him. I don't know what more he suspicioned."

"Where is he now?" cried Tom.

"Mr. Skinner found him a place in Athens. He's been there all winter. I wisht I'd had the luck!" groaned Patten.

"Well," cried Tom, springing to his feet,

"we have heard enough! What shall we do next? What ought to be done first? Schuyler ought not to bear another moment of this monstrous injustice. Within an hour he must be a free man."

"Gently!" said Mr. Fletcher, laying his hand upon his shoulder. "We cannot storm the jail at such an hour as this. It is nearly midnight. Besides, there are legal preliminaries to be attended to. Trust me, I shall not rest. I will see everybody—I will take all necessary steps to give him a triumphant exit in the morning. We must also take measures for Mr. Skinner's arrest. By the way," he exclaimed, "we haven't a minute to lose!"

As they went out together, they found quite a little crowd collected outside the office door, that, in some way, had got wind of the unusual proceedings. The news was too startling, too joyous to be kept. It leaped from one to another like a prairie fire, and the little band, growing larger at every moment, went from street to street with cheers that made the welkin ring. Shutters flew open, glad questions and answers rebounded, the steady stream grew till the whole town seemed alive. As each drifted into the streets, there was plenty found for him to do. Someone had proposed a plan that met with great favour, and everybody

turned in with a will. There was very little more sleep for anybody in Penfield that night.

In the fine new dwelling of carven gray stone, just outside the town, there had been lights moving behind tightly closed blinds all the evening. Within had been, all day, a scene of great confusion, gradually resolving itself into order. Carpets had been rolled away, pictures and furniture were shrouded in linens, great trunks were piled in the lower hall.

Such had been the state of Mr. Skinner's health, as his wife had told her friends, that his physicians had insisted upon the perfect rest of a prolonged sojourn in Europe. He had only awaited the issue of the trial, but had so poorly borne the strain that they were leaving post haste without waiting to make their adieux.

In fact they had not revealed the hour of their departure to their most intimate friends. Mr. Wickham had left the day before, to see if there were any possible way to expedite their passage. He had telegraphed that he had been fortunate in securing rooms left vacant at the last moment. If they took the first express after midnight, they might yet reach the steamer which would sail the next morning. He had provided for all the connections, and would meet them at the train.

Mr. Skinner had been frightfully nervous as

the evening advanced. He had given orders that nobody should be admitted, and was greatly annoyed by a long parley at the door, at the late hour of eleven o'clock. He rang the bell with a testy enquiry.

"It was Mis' Patten, sir," said the servant, "a-cryin' and a-cavortin' like mad. You could hardly beat her off with a club," he added virtuously. "She said Patten was took up for something—she didn't know what—and he wanted you to know. I told her to come in the mornin' "—the man giggled at his wit.

"You did very wrong!" cried Skinner, with an unreasonable burst of anger. "That was a person I wanted to see. Call her back! Be quick!"

The crestfallen man vanished only to return later with the apologetic statement that he had looked for her everywhere in vain. He had even run all the way to her house, but she wasn't there, and as for finding her in the black rainy streets, you might as well hope to find the traditional black hair in a bucket of tar.

Mr. Skinner swallowed his chagrin as well as he was able.

"After money, as usual, I suppose," he said to his wife, with a ghastly attempt at a smile. "I must leave word with Wickham about it."

He went down to the reception room just off

the spacious hall, and walked restlessly to and fro, turning blindly at the corners with lowered head and long, loping pad, pad, like a panther in his cage.

"He has such a tender heart!" said Mrs. Skinner, following with her maid. "He really cannot bear anything more. I dare not even mention poor Mr. Page's name in his presence. He couldn't feel it more if he were his own brother."

"Will that carriage never come?" Mr. Skinner was crying, as he peered irritably through the window. "We shall be late for the train."

"Oh, no, my dear," said Mrs. Skinner sweetly. "It is barely ten minutes of twelve."

"It was that half an hour ago," snapped Mr. Skinner. "Somebody has stopped the clock."

She only smiled in a way that nearly drove him frantic. Should he ever get off? Everybody was in league against him. Only a few hours, as men count time, and he might be taking a long, tonic breath of the sea air, miles and miles from the land to which he hoped never to return. But those hours were growing into eternity!

Now the trunks were being carried away. Now they were giving the last directions to the man who was to sleep in the basement, and take care of the house. And now, at last, after mad-

dening delay, came the delightful clamour of horses' hoofs and clattering wheels.

"In very good time, too," Mrs. Skinner ventured to say, as she helped her impatient husband into his coat. "It is really five minutes before we ordered it to come."

Mr. Skinner did not answer as he strode to the door.

"And now what is the matter?" he cried, in the ugliest mood, as the valet stood directly in the way, stupidly staring at something just outside the door.

He pushed him angrily aside only to find himself confronted with the shining badge of the chief of the police, with two or three shadowy supporters in the mist beyond.

"Why, what — what — what ——" he stammered. Then, bracing himself with a great effort, he continued more coherently:

"I beg that you won't detain me, gentlemen. I am on my way to the train. Most important that I get the connection. I really cannot attend to any business at present."

"I am afraid we cannot excuse you, sir," said the officer sternly.

He looked wildly around. Mrs. Skinner and the maid, loaded with impedimenta, were close behind. He heard his wife's thin, high voice:

"Are you sure that you put the orange water

in the satchel? Mr. Skinner would be so annoyed—he never can take a bath without his orange water."

The officer advanced a step, laying his hand upon his shoulder.

"Jabez Skinner," he said solemnly, "I arrest you, in the name of the people, upon charge of the murder of Hallett Fallon!"

Mr. Skinner's hand went swiftly to a side pocket, something slender and shining gleamed in the soft rose-tinted light of the hall. There was a sharp report, and, with a bullet crashing through his brain, Jabez Skinner fell heavily to the floor.

CHAPTER XXI.

BEN ADHEM'S NAME.

AFTER Tom had left him Schuyler had thrown himself upon his narrow cot, endeavouring to lose his unhappy consciousness in sleep, but all in vain—never had he been more vividly awake. Tom's question continuously repeated itself to him: "Had he thought of Dorothy?" Why, when had there ever been a moment when he had not held her in his innermost life? He smiled as he went back to the very first haunts of memory, and saw himself catching frogs with the "little brother," in the sweet, willow-bordered stream that ran through the fields just beyond the two farm-houses. Then they were riding old Billy bare-back—the two of them together—in a breakneck, utterly delightful way, through miles of blossoming country road. Then there were picnics in the summer heat, and coasting and snow-balling in the winter cold, but always and everywhere, in the foreground of every

picture, stood the rare little, fair little maiden, Dorothy.

Then he remembered when the man's heart began to awake in him, and how that sweet, inspiring presence went with him to the Mexican mines. Always one goal lay before him—always name and fame were to be won for her smile, to be laid at her feet.

Then came a vision that still made his heart beat, of two slender figures walking in Paradise, while over them hung the splendour of the full September moon. After that the full fruition of perfect companionship, the tears—sweet, even, since they had been shed together—over a little mound for whose sweet sake the whole earth had become sacred ground. And, finally, the ideal comradeship of the last few years, when they had read and worked and played together like two happy children, in perfect unity of taste and purpose. Such generous years, with Love walking at the right hand, and Fame fairly clasped with the left!

All at once came a moment for which he was not in the least prepared. Suddenly, without warning, his mood of unnatural exaltation fell from him. In the reaction inevitable to all strong natures, another self arose and took possession of all the land; a self which asserted itself to be his sanest personality, and whose

dominant chord was a wild, mad clinging to life. It laughed at the mock grandeur of his words to Tom. There was but one good of which man could be certain, and that was life! Had anyone ever made a map of that unknown blackness beyond? If he dropped Dorothy's dear hand, should he ever find it again in the infinite labyrinths of God's great universe?

Besides, he was still so young—but little past thirty years, in the fulness and perfection of all his powers; his brain full of ideas struggling to the birth, with a future lying before him—why should he disguise it from himself?—to which few men could hope to attain. Doors were beginning to open everywhere into new worlds. A man had once thought, eighteen hundred years ago, that he had seen a door open into heaven!

What might not be hoped for in these latter days from the door of electricity alone, which, as yet, was only open on a crack? He had meant to push it farther. Who knows how far one might see when it was wide open? There might even be other doors for higher and unsuspected powers, still rusting on their hinges in that sky parlour of nature called man's brain. If there were anything in the Captain's unshaken belief, he had hoped he might prove a small

channel for that spirit which was everywhere trying to find an entrance into matter. He should not care half so much to come upon it in another stage of being. He had always much preferred the absorbing interest and struggle of pushing doors open from the earth side. Right here, in this little world, he should like to have found the keys of hell and death.

Oh, the dear, dear old earth! Oh, sweetest and prettiest Dorothy! No, he could not, would not die! All his strong young life rebelled madly against it. His blood was boiling, every nerve tingling, his brain on fire. He sprang to his feet and walked breathlessly to and fro, till, from sheer fatigue, he again fell heavily upon the bed.

Must all this hope and promise be dashed into nothingness, or at best consigned to the torture of a living tomb? Could God permit such a thing? Was there any God? The reaction was complete. Bitterly humiliated, he felt that he had never known himself before. Just one cowardly cry for life! A tidal wave of grief and horror seemed to surge over him, in whose devastating undertow he was swept from all prop and succour, "an orphan in a desolate universe." It was the hour and power of darkness.

When he again came to himself from a kind

of merciful stupor, the birds were beginning to sing in their nests—the robins, the blue-birds, the orioles, how well he knew them all! A cold blue light was faintly outlining the grating. He murmured to himself, with pity for somebody he scarcely knew whom:

> "'Ah, sad and strange, as in dark summer dawns,
> The earliest pipe of half awakened birds
> To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
> The casement slowly grows a glimmering square.'"

But he was strangely quiet; the fiery tempest had all passed by. A sweet old tune was singing itself in his brain, and swaying his mood with its gentle minor rhythm. He remembered it was a lullaby, long forgotten, that his mother used to croon to him, as, after some baby hurt or fright, he lay cradled in her arms in exquisite content. Was he held just as securely now, in a greater embrace?

His peace grew upon him as he lay motionless and exhausted from "the conflict on the silent battle-field," where the greatest of life's battles are fought. Had it been for years, or forever—that blank terror? But now he even smiled as he remembered one of those lovely traditions the Captain was always telling him, and how to "the three holy children" in the flames, the midst of the furnace had suddenly

been made "as it had been a moist, whistling wind." A moist, whistling wind! Yes, even for him, unworthy, it was not too much to express the exquisite languor of relief. The heart of a child had come back to him.

"Captain! Captain!" he cried, very much as he had called to that dear, tender friend in the old dark days in the mine.

Almost as in response, a quatrain floated into his mind, which he had often heard him repeat. It was written by one of the present age who—the Captain used to say—was so pure in heart that he had that perfection of eyesight that can see God. Thus, inevitably, he was delivered from all craven fear:

> "And so beside the Silent Sea,
> I wait the muffled oar;
> No harm from Him can come to me
> On ocean or on shore."

The words fell upon him like a benediction. The strong, unselfish soul was itself once more. Quietly ready for any fate, he arose and dressed himself with the greatest care.

Presently his breakfast was brought in. It was one of unusual luxury, every possible delicacy being heaped upon the table, the sheriff himself superintending it. He was in the best of spirits—quite off his balance,

Schuyler thought—as he walked restlessly about, loudly urging him to eat.

"You'll need all your strength," he said, "before you get through with the day."

Schuyler frowned slightly; it jarred upon his mood. There was an indelicacy betraying a coarse nature, he thought, in such undisguised anticipation and enjoyment of the coming excitement of the morning. In spite of the rough hospitality and even reproachful disappointment, he could only take a roll and a cup of coffee, although, with never forgotten breeding, he expressed the most courteous thanks. After all, when one was so near the opening chapters of the great new volume, what matter about the few last sentences in the brief time preface?

The time sped on. To Schuyler, sitting motionless, every faculty tense and strained, it seemed as if there were an unusual stir in the jail. More and more his sensitive soul shrank within him. The sheriff had been in and out half a dozen times. Never had he seen him so enjoy the importance of his situation.

"It is a fine day, sir!" he said, in his heartless way. "The clouds are all rolling away. I never saw a finer spring morning."

And now came the merriest fanfare of sound. Schuyler thought every bell in Penfield, great and small, must be ringing its maddest. Such

a clashing and rattling and clanging! Such a joyful babel of confusion! Some great piece of news must have come in that world which was all over for him. He could see the patch of bright blue heaven through the narrow grating. How the happy people must be walking in the sweet spring sunshine! The women would have bunches of blue violets in the bosom of their gowns! There would be yellow dandelions in the grass!

> "Alas, that a soul can be so sad,
> And the world neither know nor care!"

He wondered, also, from time to time, what had become of Tom, whom he had expected at the earliest hour. And Gray, who was to give him the last news about Dorothy, and Manning and Beals, he hoped they were all going to stand by him to the last. He had hoped they would be with him now, but, of course, they did not understand that such trouble as his was a bitter hashish expanding moments into centuries.

And, now, along the corridor came a more official tramp. Yes, the moment had come! He straightened himself to his full height, his head thrown proudly back. He was ready. If he shrank from the curious crowd, they should never know it.

The guard advanced to their usual places.

He did not notice that they were strangely excited, and that they bowed to him with unusual respect. They descended to the vestibule of the jail. Ah, there they all were, the faithful friends, not one of them was missing. Tom had flung himself upon him with the shock of a cyclone. Gray was wringing one hand, Beals another, Manning had him by the shoulder. There were incoherent words of joy and congratulation. What did it all mean? Had everybody gone mad?

Schuyler turned to stare at the sheriff, who was reading some kind of a proclamation, but his heart had begun to pump wildly, making such a roaring in his ears that he could not understand a word.

"Hurrah!" cried Tom hoarsely, at the close.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" resounded on every side, but in a very choked and broken way. Even the guards were coughing and blowing their noses.

Schuyler, deathly pale, his lip slightly trembling, looked from one to the other. The sheriff took him by the shoulder.

"You are free, man! Can't you understand it? Just as free as air!"

He turned and flung open the outer door of the jail. As far as the eye could see there was

one dense mass of bobbing heads. At sight of Schuyler, the crowd burst into a wild, ringing cheer that rent the heavens. Hats and caps were thrown in the air—three times three the deafening shouts arose. Bells rang, drums beat, cannon were fired, Pandemonium reigned.

In some way, Schuyler never knew how, he found himself seated in a carriage trimmed profusely with flowers and waving branches of trees. The horses had been unhitched, and a score of men were contending for the honour of dragging it forward with ropes. The Penfield band was playing its shrillest, in front, and Tom, Gray, Mr. Manning, Mr. Fletcher, Dr. Charley, and Lame Joe—carrying the ecstatic baby Schuyler in one strong arm—were a mounted guard of honour on either side. The women of the sewing-school crowded the walks, marching gaily two by two, and the little children of the Park were running and dancing and singing everywhere.

But proudest, most conspicuous of all, perched upon a seat behind his hero, rode a triumphant "tiger" in the shape of young Pete, his wide mouth stretched until the corners were fairly lost in the rays of sun-bright hair behind his ears. At his back was the wise Toni, inured to every vicissitude, precariously balancing himself with paws on his shoulder, while he gravely

wagged a tail adorned with a white-and-blue streamer, on which in bright red letters flamed the device :

QUO HONOR DUCIT!

Schuyler looked from side to side unable to believe it real. Had he awakened in another planet ? Surely never before was there such an enchanting flood of spring sunshine ; such exquisitely blue sky and soft fleeciness of clouds ! such sweet, fresh, green lanes ! such birds ! such flowers starring the grass ! Surely the world was never so beautiful before, or he should have noticed it ! And through all throbbed the joyous, confusing clangour and din of the bells and the cannon ! Was there ever such a gala day since the world began ?

He could not speak or protest, he was choked with tears. And so the happy, shouting people carried him on and on to the pale, pretty wife, awaiting him upon her knees, with passionate sobs and cries of joy.

The Fallon house was tightly closed as they passed it by. Only Tom's quick eye discerned the opening of a lattice behind a clinging vine. There was a glimpse of an April face in perfect keeping with the day—tears lying heavy upon

the long dark eyelashes, but the mouth all sunshine with the momentary smiles and dimples. Tom's hat flew off with a low, sweeping bow at the flutter of a small white handkerchief. He rode with uncovered head until they had entirely passed out of sight.

The din of the approaching procession made a great stir, also, in the old red farm-house. Cousin Delia, yellow and shrivelled as a mummy, had not spoken for hours. Dr. Hardy had thought she would scarcely come to earthly consciousness again. But a strange subtle interest that had run through her life recalled the departing spirit. At the noise of drum and trumpet and fife she opened her fading eyes widely.

"I hope it ain't a fire! Where is my purse?" she demanded, in a voice so clear and strong that Aunt Patty was startled as if a voice had spoken from the dead.

"Oh, it is Mr. Schuyler, you poor soul!" she said tenderly; "you will be so glad! They've found out all about it. He never done that dreadful thing. They've found the poor wretch that done it!"

"I want to know!" said Cousin Delia coldly. "And ain't they goin' to do nothing at all to Schuyler?"

"Why, of course not," cried Aunt Patty, in-

dignant in spite of herself. "But mebbe you don't sense the thing. They're bringin' of him home—our Mr. Schuyler, you know—bringin' him like a prince! Hear 'em cheering—they can't do enough for him."

"I want to see," said Cousin Delia shortly.

"It will not do any harm to gratify her," said Dr. Hardy, and, wrapping a blanket about her, he lifted the light figure and carried her to the window.

The procession was just in front of the house, Schuyler bowing to the right and left at some unusual demonstration of sympathy and affection, his face radiant with the first glimpse of the home from which he had been banished so long, and the beautiful, graceful woman standing breathless in the open door.

"They've taken off the horses," she said feebly, in grim disapprobation; "they hadn't ought to make beasts of themselves."

The gay train swept by with shouting and singing, with trumpet and drum, and all the air ceaselessly vibrating with the clamour of the bells. Cousin Delia feebly waved her hand to the bed, and they carried her back, laying her gently on the pillows.

She closed her eyes in sheer exhaustion, but she was resenting her defeat. She would not have wished Schuyler Page to forfeit his life, but

the punishment of a few years would not have been entirely distasteful to her. In her eyes it would have been the natural sequence of that pride which, the Bible says, always goes before a fall. But that he should come to such brilliancy of triumph as utterly to falsify her lifelong prophecies, that surely was undeservedly bitter! Perhaps the end was not yet. Even now, knowing him so well, was she not more clear-sighted than any of these fatuous fellow-creatures? The indomitable spirit made one more effort to assert itself. Once more she opened her dim eyes:

"'In the country—of the blind,'" she panted, "the one-eyed man—is——'"

Then a long, long sigh. After that, silence! a silence never again to be broken by Cousin Delia.

An hour after, Cousin Hiram awoke from an unusually peaceful slumber. They had been late in dressing him and bringing him out by the fire. Cousin Delia had already been removed and was lying in state amid the solemn dignities of the seldom-used best parlour. They had laid the loved pocket book and old-fashioned watch upon the table by Cousin Hiram's side. He was greatly troubled as he caught sight of them.

"Dely! Dely!" he cried, like a frightened

child. "Why, Dely's gone out! Why didn't Dely take her purse?"

He hadn't been so roused in years. He wrestled with himself for further expression, brightening somewhat, as he pondered.

"She hain't gone fur," he nodded confidently to Aunt Patty, with an evident appeal to her common sense. "Why, Dely's left her purse! Then you know she hain't gone fur."

It was evening of the same long-remembered day. The citizens of Penfield had always felt that no occasion had been sufficiently honoured until it had been rounded up by a climax of spread-eagle oratory. Accordingly another deputation had been formed, and, in the still rosy twilight, the leading men of the town in carriages, with a large following on foot, and the inevitable band of music, arrived in front of the Page homestead.

Many hands had quickly festooned the trees with coloured lanterns; there were bonfires on every side; fireworks were crackling and fizzing in the empty lot just opposite and innumerable rockets cleaving the air. The caterer of the town had spread a table as by magic upon the lawn, and Gray and Tom, Dr. Charley and Sam Peters, were busy dispensing hot coffee, sandwiches, and salads to the crowd. Pete and

Toni were under everybody's feet, but universally welcome and popular.

Schuyler, with bared head, was standing upon an upper balcony of the house. Dorothy, in the dainty white gown that he loved, stood by his side, her fair hair like a crown, her cheeks on fire. She had no eyes for the surging crowd or the flattering demonstrations on every side. Only one person drew and held her fascinated eyes. "Hercules conquered whether he stood or walked or sat, or whatever thing he did." Nothing could stir her deep content.

Two or three old friends were standing on the fringe of the crowd.

"That was a fine speech, Fletcher," exclaimed Mr. Manning, as that gentleman came toward them, after descending from a hastily improvised platform, where he had been adding his tribute to the universal eulogy and congratulation.

"He deserved it all, and more," said Mr. Fletcher heartily. "He is a brave fellow! I am glad to bear any part, no matter how small, in compensating him for the cruel injustice he has suffered."

"The day must have been in striking contrast to Mr. Fallon," said Mr. Manning. "I hear he took the news very hard."

"Yes, some officious numskull roused him at dead of night with a summons to Skinner's

side—useless, as the poor wretch was dead when they raised him. The shock was pretty hard for Fallon, with his heart trouble. He came near following him, Dr. Hardy tells me, although he had notably rallied this morning."

"He is mourning afresh for his son, and refuses to see anybody," said Dr. Peters.

"There has been no great rush to the house, I am sure," said Mr. Manning. "No man, for the moment, more thoroughly forgotten. It must be an unspeakable mortification to him."

"And yet he has had a great piece of good luck in the death of Mr. Skinner," said Mr. Fletcher. "There will be no awkward revelations from that quarter. It may save him from prosecution."

"Nobody could envy him, even if he escapes," said Mr. Manning. "You might call him lucky, perhaps, if dead and buried pasts were not sure to have such ghosts. From this time he will live in a haunted house."

"And so will his friends," said Mr. Beals bitterly. "He has acknowledged, to-day, that he is a ruined man. He will make an assignment to-morrow."

"Tough on you, Beals!" said Mr. Fletcher commiseratingly, "and scores of victims besides. But he will probably cheat justice, consistent to the last."

"And only a year ago," said Mr. Manning, "he was the wonder and admiration of all. I have heard him called, by all odds, the leading citizen of Penfield."

Mr. Beals winced.

"It is a swift reversal of judgment," said Mr. Fletcher, "and there is always some good reason for such unanimous verdict from our fellow-men. 'Whom you find at the door depends upon whom you have sent to the door.' All the old stories are being revived. Of all who so followed and flattered him a few months ago, 'there are none as poor so do him reverence.'"

"If we could see more such awards in this life," said Mr. Manning, "selfish interest alone would soon make this a more honest world. It is a great object lesson for the ambitious youth of Penfield," he smiled. "Look at Lame Joe lost in prophetic admiration of the strut of that round-eyed young Pete, with his guiding motto still waving from Toni's tail."

"Class in moral fractions, come forward," laughed Mr. Fletcher. "Don't cry over your lesson. Please work out upon the board an example coming under the first rule. The generous half is worth double the selfish whole!"

There was a prolonged thunder of cheering, more vociferous than anything that had gone before. They were fairly splitting their throats.

"Schuyler Page is speaking," said Mr. Beals.

"What did he say?" said Mr. Manning, putting his hand to his ear.

"It is no matter at all what he says," cried Mr. Fletcher. "All is gold to-day that falls from his lips. The people love him."

"Is that Judge Pelham who is responding?" said Mr. Manning. "We really ought to get a little nearer. What was that last?" he asked of Charley and Sam going gaily by.

"Variations on the same old theme," laughed Dr. Charley. "Schuyler Ben Adhem—may his tribe increase!"

"Amen!" said Mr. Fletcher.

Dr. Peters wiped his eyes, as he added softly to himself:

"'And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest.'"

THE END.

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